

Transformations of Lisu Social Structure Under Opium Control and Watershed Conservation in
Northern Thailand

by

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

Traveling to Thirty Thousand

In 1968, it took five days in the dry season to travel from Chiang Mai to Thirty Thousand, located in Chiang Dao District, Chiang Mai Province and Mae Hong Son Province. Travel was by foot, sometimes with the aid of a mountain ponies, through old growth forests and open patches of swidden fields along routes that transported forest products, domestic cattle, and other trade items from as far away as the Tibetan borderlands. In the 20th century, these trails had carried opium. In the mid-1990s, it took as little as two and a half hours in the dry season. Now the roads brought down wheat, mango, coffee, flowers, *lam yai* (*Dimocarpus longan* Lour., like a small litchee), cabbages, potatoes, and people, by bus, Land Rover, pickup truck or 4-stroke motorcycles.

This spatial and temporal difference encapsulated and encompassed the changes that have occurred in the last twenty-five years of economic development and political intervention in the mountains of northern Thailand. The story I tell here sets up “the rest of the story:” how a Lisu village known as Revealed River Village, located in the Thirty Thousand cluster of Lisu villages, came to the circumstances it was in the mid-1990s. The main vehicle for state penetration was the Sam Muen Highland Development Project (SMHDP).

The landscape was inhospitable to travel, comprised of a physical geography of steep sloping mountains of complex limestone. Thirty Thousand was northwest of Chiang Mai toward Mae Hong Son, behind Chiang Dao mountain, cutting Thirty Thousand off from easy access to government centers. What had been an advantage 30 years ago was now inconvenient. The Lisu of Thirty Thousand going to their district office in Chiang Dao town to register a birth, a death, a marriage, a new household, to apply for citizenship or to vote – all of the ordinary events of life in

the village that under the Thai government system had to be recorded and verified – had to skirt the mountain range by travelling southeast through Mae Hong Son Province to the town of Mae Malai (Chiang Province) before turning north to Chiang Dao town on the road to Fang, a six hour trip. It was as quick, much cheaper, and more arduous to walk straight through the mountains along trails.

Traveling from the lowlands to Thirty Thousand, the paved road ascended the hills past Pa Pae and the entrance to the Forestry Training Center for the SMHDP at Thung Joh, about halfway between Mae Malai and Thirty Thousand. The road became ever steeper as it headed up the mountain through regenerating forests on the high slopes and irrigated rice fields in the narrow valleys. Travelers felt palpable relief from the dusty oppressive air of the bustling lowland towns here, where the landscape felt cleaner, the air purer and lighter. Past Thung Joh the road began a series of switchbacks, up one ridge and down another, through the length of a narrow valley with a Shan or Khon Mueang (Northern Thai) town, and back up the system of switchbacks again. Here, another change became evident. Numerous signs declared the mountains to be the domain of the Royal Forest Department (RFD): Wildlife Sanctuaries, Watershed Conservation Areas, Forest Preserves, and National Parks were marked on each stretch of road. This was the realm of the RFD and the home of the mountain minorities – Lahu, Lisu, Hmong, Karen.

Yet, amazingly few “hill tribes” people were evident on the road considering how many lived in these mountains. When I traveled with Lisu villagers, we sometimes passed people we knew in other vehicles, but as often as not we were passed by strangers: passengers in the Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son bus, Thai in Mercedes sedans, villagers in pickups from all over this neighborhood of the mountains, and trucks laden high with illegal timber from Burma. Perhaps the upland minorities were invisible because many of the men did not wear “traditional” dress while traveling “down below” and avoided being marked as hill tribes, which would have subjected them to the attentions of Thai authorities. Upland minority women, who usually wore ethnic clothes, traveled much less frequently than men. The first significant sign of ethnic minorities outside of the Night Bazaar in Chiang Mai, where they sold crafts and performed dances for

tourists, was at the market town of Mae Malai where uplanders congregated in a few roadside restaurants on their way to town for government business, or taking their children to government and mission boarding schools. There were a number of Lisu and Karen villages adjacent, economically dependent on trekking tours and handicrafts sale. But Thai government officials, businessmen, and tourists were the main travelers.

I traveled in different realities, depending on how I traveled. On the bus, where I would get off at the park entrance and hope for a ride for the next 25 km in to the village, I was seen as a tourist, a back-packer, ignored and talked about, sometimes touched and rubbed by people discussing me as if I were insensate. Traveling with RFD officers, we were saluted by various other government officials and I was assumed to be a female companion of some sort. Lower-level RFD officials tended to know local leaders and waitresses of certain restaurants where they would stop for a beer. Traveling with the teachers, we were greeted by other “mountain teachers” and the market women who sold barbecued meat, noodles, and whiskey by the side of the road. Traveling with Lisu villagers was yet another experience. We were isolated. When other Lisu people drove by, they peered at each other to see who they knew sitting in the back of a passing pick-up truck sitting on lumpy sacks of produce and then talk about them and where they were going and why later, but made no acknowledgment of each other. Nor did they greet or receive greetings from businessmen, Thai officials, or Shan villagers.

Rounding a sharp curve around an out-jutting hillock, the road passed onto a wide red clay road, fronted by a tiny guardhouse – we were entering watershed conservation territory. The entrance to Thirty Thousand was through the Huay Nam Dang reserve (formally declared a National Park in 1995). Entrance was restricted, although I rarely saw this enforced except for registering tourists and checking Lisu trucks for contraband. Most visitors only went in as far as the Doi Kaew Lom viewpoint, about 7 km. off the main road where the older sister of the King of Thailand had built a nice suburban-style split-level called the Silver Orchid Palace in 1992. Thai tourists visited for the vistas of Chiang Dao Mountain, the winter flower gardens, and the imagined proximity to royalty. It was the perfect setting for photos. For the more adventurous, there was a

“genuine” hill tribe village a few kilometers down the steep slope of the road. Unlike the road to the palace, this road was not surfaced and at points its grade was 35 degrees. In the dry season, dust lay 18 inches deep. At the bottom of the road, a few row houses with tin roofs surrounded a shallow fish pond, a resettlement built as part of a Royal Project. Electrical wires led into each house. There, the middle class matrons of Bangkok bought little woven bracelets and clucked over the poor, dirty children. The Bangkok men winked as they asked the girls about their sexual practices and single women wanted to know why the girls were not married or how many children the women had; everyone “knew” that hilltribes practiced ‘free love’ (like westerners), married by the age of 14, and had no less than 10 babies. The tourists distributed candy to the children – a form, perhaps, of *tham bun*¹ – and drove off. This small segment of the village depended on tourism for much of their income. Further up the hill, at the steepest section of the road yet, was the other 80% of the village, the out-of-the-way genuine village. Like every other Lisu village I visited, the houses were built in clusters of kin groups set apart from each other, with a yard in front for greeting visitors. Here, the villagers had rejected electrical wires, fish ponds, and Bangkok tourists.

The headquarters of the Sam Muen Highland Development Project Center at the Nam Ru Unit (Watershed Conservation District No. 9) in which Thirty Thousand was located lay another 18 kilometers past the entrance to Huai Nam Dang. The road deteriorated rapidly after Huai Nam Dang – narrow, clay, inches thick with dust in the dry season and feet deep with mud in the rainy season – up and around a hill, down a steep slope to a muddy bottom, gaining speed so that we can fly through that and up the next section of road before slowing to go around another terrifying curve on cliff edges. In the rainy season, Project trucks could get stuck for hours. The RFD did not waste its budget maintaining a section of the road they rarely used and the Nam Ru Unit used

¹Thai: make merit. It is a form of gift giving in Buddhism whereby the giver receives merit for future rebirth. Traditionally, *tham bun* is presentation of gifts to monks but in modern times, charitable gift giving has been redefined as suitable to do good and make merit. It seems that it had been extended to even minor gift giving. Thai teachers at the mountain school used to make sweets to serve their students on the teacher’s birthday. They defined this as *tham bun*, and said that to make merit on their birthday brought them good luck throughout the coming year.

its limited budget to pay Shan refugees from Burma to plant trees, for which the foresters received a bonus. The foresters thought the Lisu should maintain the road, built for “their benefit.” The Lisu responded that the government used the road more. And every season, the bogs on the road deepened.

The road came to a straightaway and a few tiny roads etched off into the forest. There’s the new, unfinished road to the satellite village founded when the guardian of the “Old Grandfather” shrine left Revealed River due to a fight with the headman over a marriage; the new driveway to an older satellite village of Revealed River; through reforestation plantations of pine; and the steep, well-used path through regenerated forest down into Revealed River Village, used by forestry officials, development picnic-ers, Lisu villagers, but never by trekkers, who had been banned when opium users were evicted. The road entered the village at the head of a high, narrow valley and split toward the upper part of the village, the home of one village faction, or down through the center of the village, home of two other factions, and ended at an open plaza originally constructed to accommodate Royal Thai Government Helicopters, now meant to be a playground for the children in the Mountain School, who preferred the forest. The plaza was bordered by the school at one end and the “community meeting house” built by the Project, where I slept, at the other.

In the evening in the cold season, the village at evening was busy – dogs barking, children playing, women sitting on verandahs sewing tunics and embroidering edges for garters, men gathering to talk in public areas. But in heavy rains, especially in the agricultural season, the village shut down and appeared as an island insulated and isolated by waves of mist. The rain curtained the glow of hearths behind shutters and damped down trickles of smoke through thatch roofs. No lights shown from homes, no electrical wires passed from house to house. On nights like these, families went to sleep early. All was silent except for the barking of watch dogs. A forestry official once almost refused to leave me in the village because he was convinced the village had been abandoned in the few days since he had last visited. In hardly any sense was Revealed River a traditional village, yet coming upon it in late evening it gave off an air of timeless

isolation and self-sufficiency. Nestled against verdant mountain ridges, it seemed small, shielding itself against the surrounding expanse of primeval forest. What of this Shangri-La was true? All of it, for it was the sense anyone got of Revealed River on a foggy, rainy evening, even for those of us who lived there. Inaccessibility was part of the beauty of the place for visitors and the appeal for villagers, especially the older ones. And yet, none of this was true. Revealed River was a society more layered than the picture of the little village embraced in blue-green mountains allowed viewers to conceive. It had been established as Lisu village in the early 1970s when poppy was grown from “horizon to horizon,” having been before that a Hmong and then a Lahu village. Between the 1970s and the 1990s there was a quantum increase in Thai state control in the daily lives of upland peoples and fundamental transformations in their ways of making a living and social organization. Revealed River was fully incorporated into the Project. Fields of poppies had been replaced by fields of barley and potatoes; pioneering swiddening by orchards and rotating swiddening with short fallows; mountain ponies by deteriorating pick-up trucks; frequent migration by permanent settlement; and autonomy by emplacement of soldiers and forestry officers in the village to ensure that the villagers adhered to the rules of the Project. This dissertation is about how transformations in Lisu social structure played out in the process of the restructuring of the local economy through the end of the opium economy.

Topic

How did these people get from there to here? The tremendous changes in the lives of the Lisu people of Thirty Thousand had resulted in historically specific transformations of kinship, household, and village structure. These transformations occurred in ways that were congruent with previous historical and social formations of Lisu society in different times and places, grounded in enduring cultural principles that manifested in different ways depending on political and economic conditions. This dissertation is a study of how existing Lisu social structure induced people to choose certain strategies over others when faced with new political and economic conditions and how they dealt with the consequences of their strategies. People do not transform

like automatons to suit changing conditions. But what is continuity? *What* is maintained and *how* is it maintained? I used an actor-based theoretical approach, drawn from both ecological and praxis theory, to account for both altered and persistent social forms. A key problem was to pay attention to the multiple contexts of, and structurally generated transformations in, existing social relations in the process of change. I posited that the household was a core unit of adaptation, the nexus of production, distribution, and consumption and of social and biological reproduction, and a unit of social, economic, political and symbolic significance to the Lisu. The household was also the core of continuity as culturally formed expectations of family roles constructed meaningful actions and relationships. How households responded to new economic conditions was understandable in the context of specific history, social relations, and culturally structured goals. I examined the multiple and conflicting tensions within the household and kin networks, fissions shaped by gender and generation, and how these structured social change. I found that relationships among households expressed through patrilineal kinship had changed significantly in the context of people's integration this, but still within Lisu cultural ideals.

Social relations are best understood by taking an actor-based or praxis approach in order to understand both change and continuity (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). Despite the differences in ecological actor-based (Bennett 1976; Orlove 1980) and cultural or symbolic-oriented praxis theory (Bourdieu 1977; see also Ortner 1984), these approaches share the ability to better explain the nature of social structure by accepting that people are the entities through which culture exists and change occurs. This theory is also better able to explain variation in behavior in terms of actors taking advantage of ambiguities in meaning (see Turner 1967) or working out contradictions in social structure (see Kelly 1985; Leach 1965 [1954]). In this model, change is closely related to existing social and cultural structures. People do not make decisions and act in isolation; rather, they achieve culturally defined goals by culturally defined methods and this structures action. In this process cultural meaning and social relations are recreated, although never exactly (Bourdieu 1977; Comaroff 1987). Nevertheless, culture and society do not exist only in and of themselves, *sui generis*; there are limitations on the resources

available, both material and cultural (Giddens 1984). Existing meanings and relations are *intentionally* but not always *successfully* reproduced; there can never be complete reproduction of what was before as the conditions in which they are reproduced – the material and cultural resources – change. But their lived experience is as members of Lisu households and kin groups, so that the possibilities for action are channeled along particular paths even though the outcomes change. Economic systems and agricultural development projects were salient resources in people's actions, but so, too, was family.

To study the effects of integration into Thai and international global regimes, as executed through forestry and narcotics control policy, I focused on how social structure worked out in practice in Lisu households. The culturally constructed generative principles that motivated people were central to understanding their strategies and action. Familial and household tensions have a cultural basis, and different positions are acted on and legitimized through use of culturally valid symbols (Yanagisako 1984; Comaroff 1987). The radical change experienced by Lisu in northern Thailand in the latter quarter of the twentieth century was played out within already existing structures within Lisu society that themselves had been historically formed, and the household was pre-eminent in this. Household decision-making processes could only be partially explained by economic factors.

The relationship between family structure and economic change is a key issue in the literature. Some have argued that increased involvement in commercialized markets brings about fragmentation of kin networks, nuclearization of extended family households, breakdown of traditional social controls, and increased individualism (Parsons 1943; Goode 1963; Shorter 1975; Caldwell 1982). Arguments against this view take two main tacks. Increased market dependency may result in poverty and economic insecurity. The maintenance of kin networks alleviated the effects of fluctuation in the availability of scarce resources or to gain access to jobs (Szanton 1972; Stack 1974; Hareven 1982). Second, historical research in Europe suggested considerable cultural continuity despite radical economic change; that the nuclear household form common to western Europe preceded capitalism rather than rising because of it (Laslett and Wall 1972;

Goody 1976; Segalen 1986). I noted two significant gaps in the literature. First, the theories mentioned above did not account for the mechanisms through which either change or continuity occurred. The second was an empirical gap. There was at the time a dearth of research on agricultural change and its effect on the household and kin networks, except for work by Wilk (1984) and Netting (Netting 1981; Netting *et al.* 1984). This has since changed; more recent literature will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The evidence from my research supported cultural continuity in household forms. There is a caveat: the Lisu economy has been somewhat commercialized for a century, due to their involvement in opium cultivation, a cash crop; thus, changes in social organization may have taken place a century ago as I discuss in Chapter 2. In fact Lisu had been oriented toward individual household organization for some time. Yet, there has been a recent trend toward more cohesive and cooperative village-level organization, as individual households could not move away when there was social conflict or poor agricultural production. This latter fact is due to political and environmental conditions in Thailand, much more than a strictly economic issue. However, the household has been shown to be the primary social unit in many Tibetan societies, with village and kinship relations being the loci of adaptation to the political economy (Samuel 1993; McKhann 1999).

Households were of great heuristic value in understanding local practice in conditions of change. The household is an appealing unit of study because researchers believed it to be more objective than conceptions of kinship and family, being clearly bounded, based on observation of behavior, and comparable across cultures (Wilk and Netting 1984). Studies have found the household to be a key analytical unit because it is the locus of social strategizing (Levine 1988; Netting 1981; Netting 1993) and economic decision-making and resource allocation (Hareven 1977; Poats, Schmink and Spring 1988). Marriage and household formation also have profound demographic impact, with observable ecological consequences (Foster 1978a; Netting 1981; Fricke, Syed and Smith 1986; Caldwell 1996). Yet "the household" is as much a folk category as "kin," and is too often grounded in folk conceptions such as "domestic functions" (Yanagisako

1979; Harris 1981; Wilk and Netting 1984). The degree to which production, consumption, distribution, co-residence, and biological and social reproduction occur in a household varies (Wilk and Netting 1984; see also Sahlins 1972; Bennholdt-Thomsen 1981; Harris 1981; Harris and Young 1981; Medick 1981; Laslett 1983; Collier 1974; Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Caldwell 1996). The overlap between the household and concepts of kinship and family in each society are equally variable. Nevertheless, the definition of the household to actors in society may prove to be the most valid cross-cultural definition (Yanagisako 1979). Something labeled a "household" is often found to be a significant social unit to the members of a given society. The household was the primary social unit for the Lisu of Revealed River and elsewhere in northern Thailand, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

Especially where the household is congruent with concepts of family and therefore "naturalized," it is also meaningful and symbolically significant to actors in a way that a wider system may not be, in part because the latter is unperceived or unquestioned (Bourdieu 1977; Comaroff 1987). The household is a collective unit in part due to its meaning and the perception of the shared interests of its members (Yanagisako 1984; Laslett 1984). Because the household organizes production, reproduction, and distribution, it is also implicated in the reproduction of the social system. Its stability across generations is brought about in part by a structure of complex social and power relationships, such as inheritance rights (Goody 1976; Medick 1981; Wilk and Netting 1984). Conversely, as will be seen in the case of the Lisu, changes in political and economic conditions can exacerbate inherent structural tensions and culturally constructed roles that come to the fore at the time of marriage and inheritance, distorting previously accepted social roles and principles.

The heterogeneity and contradictions of wider social relations are exhibited within the household. Besides differential access to and use of resources (Harris 1981; Paris 1988), a household may be involved in a multiplicity of enterprises that compete for the same resources. This sets up the possibility of exchange within the household and competing goals or priorities that engender negotiation among household members (Evans 1988; Heald 1991). Such

competition may be a factor in fluidity of household composition. This is significant for understanding structural tensions in society, actors' strategies for social success, their decision-making processes, and change and continuity in social structure and economic relations. Social categories such as age and gender may be the basis for social control and exploitation. Age divisions in "the lineage mode of production" (Terray 1972) are an example of this. Through control of the means of reproduction, such as control of access to wives, valuables, or ritual knowledge, elders appropriate the labor of juniors and women (Meillassoux 1981). This implies conflicting interests on the part of young and old regarding land, inheritance, and household continuity (Netting 1981; Levine 1988). There are also other culturally significant categories of people that must be considered, such as heirs and non-heirs (of material goods, social rights, ritual knowledge).

The power structure determines where actors are advantaged as well as disadvantaged. The exploited may resist change because they see themselves losing their few valued sources of power (Johnson 1983). Categories based on gender ideologies seem particularly resistant to change. The social relations crucial to social reproduction are often institutionalized in gender-typing validated by presumed biological or inherent spiritual difference. Once a form of the sexual division of labor is established, it becomes an embedded feature of the wider economic structure, and difficult to challenge (MacKintosh 1981) especially as it is embedded in sets of cultural meaning. They are over-determined. Gender relations and household practices thus are crucial to the study of social continuity (Ortner 1981) as well as change. In the case of Lisu, the political economy and cultural categories of gender of both the Thai and the Lisu also affected women's differential assimilation.

A key factor in household dynamics was the household developmental or demographic cycle (Fortes 1958; Goody 1958; Cain 1978; Foster 1978a; Greenhalgh 1985; Heald 1991; Fricke 1994; Chelcea 2003). This had been particularly salient in Lisu household-based production strategies in the opium economy; it affected relative household wealth and strategies for post-marital residence, although it was offset by the availability of cheap labor by opium addicts from

other ethnic groups such as the Karen and the Lahu. The intervention of the Thai state and international bilateral aid had fundamentally altered the household developmental cycle, giving rise to greater inequalities among households. I discuss this in Chapter 4.

This research is based on the supposition that congruency of interests between household members (or any other social grouping such as lineage members) can not be asserted *a priori* (Johnson 1983). Where there is congruency between actors of any type(s), this must be explained (Laslett 1984). Moreover, congruency of interests does not mean similarity of interests (Cain 1978). All change, especially planned development, must be analyzed in the context of its effect on the balance of power in the household (Poats, Schmink and Spring 1988; Whitehead 1981). Therefore, the nature of intra-household dynamics is of particular significance to this research. Looking at intra-household dynamics enabled me to understand the structural tensions of Lisu society and to understand how Lisu made use of the cultural, social, and economic resources available to them as discussed in Chapter 4. At the same time, social relations among people in different households were expressed in terms of kinship, and the characteristics of shared interests among kin had to be examined. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

Change occurs in the context of existing social structure and economic practices, with culturally constructed goals, methods, and internal contradictions. There should, therefore, be recognizable continuity between historical and current Lisu social practice. Lisu tried to find solutions to existing social tensions by finding possible new solutions within changing economic and political conditions. In this, the agricultural development and swidden/opium interdiction projects of the Thai state provided new potential resources in household level strategizing. For instance, it gave fathers greater control over their children's marriages and post-marital residence, in keeping with Lisu patrilineal ideology. Yet, at the same time, the difference between the structural roles of older and younger brothers gave rise to tensions over rights to power and to inheritance due to decreased access to land because of Project restriction of access to land. Many households resolved potential conflict by making use of patrilineal ideology to manage access to land. I discuss this in Chapter 5.

The Lisu

The Lisu are a Tibeto-Burman people found along the Salween River and its tributaries, in northwestern Thailand, northeastern Burma, and the far west of Yunnan Province, China. They migrated to northern Thailand from Burma and Yunnan starting in the late 19th century, when these northern reaches of Burma and Thailand were relatively peaceful as the British suppressed local warfare, but before these regions were under direct government administration. The main population had entered Thailand by the 1950s, although a small trickle still came in from Burma in the 1990s through marriage. Of the six upland ethnic minorities in Thailand, the Lisu are linguistically related to the Lahu and Akha, and culturally to the Lahu (Matisoff 1983; Lewis and Lewis 1984; Tribal Research Institute 1989). More recent linguistic work shows that the Lahu, Lisu/Lipo, Lamu, and Lolo (Yi) languages are of the Central Ngwi (previously called Lolosh) branch of the Burmic subgroup of Tibeto-Burman languages. Historical linguistic work indicates that this central branch originated in northwestern central Yunnan (Bradley 1997; Bradley 2004). The Lisu in northern Thailand generally belong to the Flowery subgroup of Lisu and are marked by pervasive linguistic and cultural borrowings from the Yunnanese Chinese (Matisoff 1983; Conrad 1989). I discuss the historical context of these ethnocultural relationships and identifiers in Chapter 2.

Lisu Society - An Overview

Reports of Lisu social society emphasized their marked individualism, competitiveness, and an ideology of egalitarianism on the basis of evidence of frequent fission of villages, rejection (or even assassination) of domineering headmen, and inter-personal competition in displays of wealth as displays of "honor," "potency," or "repute" (see Chaipigusit 1989; Conrad 1989; Dessaint 1972a; Durrenberger 1976b; Durrenberger 1983a; Hutheesing 1990a; Lewis and Lewis 1984; Scott 1932; Tribal Research Institute 1989). Lineage, clan, and village were mentioned as

well, but inconsistently. Yet, other social structures were mentioned in varying contexts. I sought to understand how these formations varied in different political economies.

The only social unit consistently mentioned in the literature as being significant was the household. It is clear from Dessaint's, Durrenberger's, and Hutheesing's work that the household was a significant unit to the Lisu themselves. Kunstadter (1980) also notes that households were the units of land management, rather than villages (see also Cooper 1984). In swiddening systems such as the Lisu's, labor rather than land was the scarce resource (Durrenberger 1976b). A household that could command surplus labor through marriage was in a position to produce surplus crops (usually opium, for cash) which could be converted into "repute" (Lisu: *myi³-do⁵*) through feasts, ritual, and fulfilling of obligations (see also Miles 1972a, 1972b). In the case of the Lisu, this was upheld by the core principles of social and political egalitarianism.

Myi³-do⁵ is a significant generative principle in Lisu society that organizes people's goals, strategies, and their relations with each other and their ancestors. Generative principles are the basic values that guide behavior and constitute the ways people implicitly evaluate their own and others' behavior on the basis of fundamental standards. *Myi³-do⁵* reflects the logic of their social relations. *Myi³-do⁵* is generally translated as "repute;" Lisu translate it into Thai as *mii kiat*, meaning to have honor, face, fame, and especially repute as in to have or be imbued with repute. Etically, it might be comparable to what we call prestige in anthropology.

Myi³ and *do⁵* are two separate words. *Do⁵* is work, effort, agency or potency, and *myi³* is fate. *Do⁵* is evidence for *myi³*. One is born with *myi³*, it is the lifeline so to speak, and you have it until it has run out and you are dead; *myi³* can be good or bad. It can not be seen or evaluated except by evidence of a person's life, by their success or failure. A person's *myi³* can only be gauged by what happens to him or her in their life, but with evidence of failure of harvest, for instance, people in society can re-evaluate a person's *myi³*. On the other hand, it is possible to have greater or lesser amounts of *do⁵*. You can have *do⁵*, but have bad *myi³*, and so have no success in your undertakings. If you can finish your tasks, do not cheat others, do what you say you can do, fulfill social obligations, feed visitors, reciprocate feasts, make good marriage

payments, then you have *do*⁵ and therefore you must have *myi*³. But in addition, *repute* comes from observance of relations of authority and respect, rights and obligations toward kin, displaying appropriate behavior. That is, *myi*³-*do*⁵ is exemplified both in individual enterprise that expresses individual autonomy; but also in adherence to standards of respect that are hierarchical within the household.

The opposite of *do*⁵ is *sha*¹-*taw*³ or shame. If you can not offer hospitality to visitors, if you have to ask for a loan, if worse yet you are not granted that loan, if your clothes are shabby, if you claim to be good at something and then do it poorly, then you have *sha*¹-*taw*³ (Durrenberger 1989:22). *sha*¹-*taw*³ is the inability to fulfill social expectations. This behavior can also be speech – to talk badly about someone brings the gossip shame and a loss of *repute*. Behavior is an important element of *myi*³-*do*⁵ and *sha*¹-*taw*³.

As Hutheesing (1990a:97-101) discusses, the two concepts are differentially gender-linked. She translates *sha*¹-*taw*³ as shyness in relation to women. A good woman should “know about” shame and behave respectfully in order to have *repute*. Practicing respect and avoidance behavior among in-laws based on relative age and generation is a matter of *myi*³-*do*⁵; and to behave inappropriately causes *sha*¹-*taw*³. But according to Hutheesing, for women, to act with a sense of shame is good – it is a constraint of behavior in the presence of relatives for whom one must show respect. On the other hand, a woman who leaves her husband for no good reason has *sha*¹-*taw*³ and does not have *myi*³-*do*⁵, by no means a good thing. For women, *myi*³-*do*⁵ largely resided in avoidance of shameful acts: not getting pregnant out of wedlock, not showing evidence of sexual activity with one’s husband, not telling off-color stories in front of one’s husband’s older brother, not gossiping or slandering others, and in fact not speaking much at all. In other contexts, it also included positive acts such as getting up early to husk rice, fix food, and go to the fields and came back to sew clothes late into the night. That is, women faced more restrictive rules on their behavior that reflected hierarchies of gender and generation.

Hutheesing and Durrenberger make rather different statements about the relationship between *myi*³-*do*⁵ and economic status. In Durrenberger’s discussions, *myi*³-*do*⁵ is intertwined

with economic status of the individuals because only economic wealth can demonstrate *myi³-do⁵* (or, more accurately in Durrenberger's terms, display of wealth demonstrates *myi³*). Hutheesing, on the other hand, focuses on *myi³-do⁵* as adherence to social mores or etiquette, behaving properly, and says that it is not about power or economic status. Durrenberger was more interested in the concept of *myi³-do⁵* in relation to spirits and did not discuss social regulation and cultural evaluation of behavior; Hutheesing was oriented toward understanding the ways in which women's status in Lisu society was formed by these social evaluations. Durrenberger's discussion of *myi³-do⁵* is more suitable for men taking action to achieve wealth, and Hutheesing's is of women's roles in the family.

In both cases, social evaluations of *myi³-do⁵* are inherently fluid as they can only be based on observed results and behavior – they can change in an instant, or from situation to situation. It does not appear to be unitary for each person, either; there are no clearly demarcated ranks of *myi³-do⁵* and it was rare for one person or household to be consistently evaluated as having *myi³-do⁵* across all domains of economic and social life. *Myi³-do⁵* was spoken of as something that people have diffusely, in each social interaction. However, that behavior was often contingent on economic status; clearly, someone who had suffered failure of their crops was in no position to demonstrate *myi³-do⁵* and when they could not host guests or fund a marriage for a son, that engendered *sha¹-taw³*. Those who were evaluated as having *myi³-do⁵* also tended to be older, heads of prosperous households, parents with many children who behaved well and worked hard. Hutheesing thinks of this phenomenon as a matter of age and more settled behavior, quoting a Lisu woman "The young men have no reputation. They quarrel with their wives all the time" (Hutheesing 1990a:99). But in the context of the household developmental cycle in the opium economy (see Chapter 4) those with *myi³-do⁵* were likely to be wealthy, and the wealthy were likely to have mature households with many laborers. Therefore, *myi³-do⁵* cannot be divorced from economic status and as a result, cultural standards were predisposed toward validation of the behavior of elders – but then, not all elders had *myi³-do⁵*. It was an indirect marker of the prosperity of the household, a way that cultural standards were upheld without looking at their

basis or questioning why some were more likely to have *myi³-do⁵* than others. The possibilities for *myi³-do⁵* had changed greatly from the 1970s to the 1990s.

Dessaint argued that a pivotal element in Lisu social organization was their latitude to migrate to avoid disputes or feuds and ineffective or authoritarian headmen (1971a, 1972a). Also, as pioneer swiddeners, the Lisu had to move periodically to find cultivable land. Durrenberger also recognized the importance of migration in dispute negotiation, but attributed Lisu egalitarianism to income from opium growing and the availability of wage laborers that enabled an economic egalitarianism reinforced by the ideological and social structure of the Lisu. That is, autonomy was enabled and heightened by the opium economy (Durrenberger 1976a; Durrenberger 1976b; Durrenberger 1983b). The significance of the lack of land ownership and inheritable fixed capital for social relations among Lisu was not considered in these analyses, but these are key to understanding transformations in Lisu social structure in the 1990s.

Political egalitarianism, the lack of overarching, stable, continuous political institutions, was a key feature of who the Lisu are. In Durrenberger (1971), this was the trait that set Lisu society apart from other ethnic groups of the uplands, but especially from the Chinese and the Chinese state. This egalitarianism in part explains the salience of the concept of *myi³-do⁵* or *repute* in the social life of Lisu men (Durrenberger 1983b). In an egalitarian society, a man's *repute* had to be jealously guarded, so that even slight attempts to assert control over others had the potential to become a major point of contention.

Despite the reported egalitarianism of Lisu society, my observations and reading of the literature indicated that egalitarianism was located in egalitarian relationships among households and was of ideological significance in the formation of new households, rather than individual freedom. There was, in fact, a pronounced gender and age hierarchy within the household and among kin so that relations between any two people were ranked. And while there were no specific ideologies of female subordination, Lisu gender ideology and practices contributed to a situation of male dominance (Hutheesing 1990a). The age/generational rankings were a source of tension in the household, dramatically illustrated by six reported cases of a son killing his father

between 1958 and 1966 (Lewis and Lewis 1984) and mothers' reports of sons' desire to kill an abusive father (Hutheesing 1990a). These tensions point to the structure of intra-household dynamics, discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4.

Dessaint, Durrenberger, and (more recently) Hutheesing discounted the significance of the village and patrilineage in social action. Rather, they noted clusterings of individual households that regularly cooperated in economic and ritual activities, supported each other in disputes, and were potential co-migrators when a village split up. Dessaint termed these "allegiance groups" (1972a). Durrenberger noted that these allegiance groups were based on groups of sisters, and so cross-cut patrilineages (1976b). However, "patriclans" and patrilineages were consistently mentioned. Older sources emphasized "patriclans" in Lisu society (Fraser 1922). The Tribal Research Institute declared that patrilineal clans "provide a cohesive force to Lisu society ... in a way that differentiates them from other tribes" (Tribal Research Institute 1989:30). Another researcher told me that Lisu social organization was strongly patrilineal as opposed to village-based but that this was masked by kin groups' inability to find sufficient land together (Prof. Uraiwan Tan-Kim-Yong, pers. comm, 1989.). The question becomes, then, when and where were patrilineal and patriclan structures significant in Lisu life? I discuss this in Chapter 5, but here I will say that patrilineages were active in ritual performances, particularly within households; in shamanic performance; and in the hierarchies of seniority of birth (older sons over younger sons, for instance) with consequences for seniority of branches of patrilineages. Patrilineages were significant for Lisu in social relations in establishing villages as well.

Reports also varied on the significance of the village. The village was a ritually meaningful unit for the Lisu (Hutheesing 1990a). Similarly, a Lisu proverb cited by Dessaint indicates ambivalence about migration versus sedentarism (1972a). But in Thailand at the height of the opium economy, the village was not a politically cohesive unit over time. It was and remains, however, a ritually significant unit, expressed particularly in New Year rituals to bring productivity and repute to the entire village. More recently, Thai policy has encouraged sedentism

and cohesion of villages for purposes of legal settlement, citizenship, local conflict resolution, and natural resource management, as a result of which the significance of the village as a unit of organization increased. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, villages have historically been significant in some Lisu societies. However, I do not discuss the ritual and symbolic significance of the villager here, or the ways the village was becoming an increasingly salient political unit for Lisu following upon sedentism and as they united to face the Thai state here. I have discussed it in Gillogly 2000.

This dissertation is an account of continuity and transformation in Lisu society from the height of the opium economy in the highlands of Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s to the economic disintegration of the 1980s and 1990s. This strand of continuity arose out of the continued existence of ideologies of kinship relations. Household and kinship forms in both the opium and post-opium economies revolved around a core script in which household survival was the central goal; as such the household remained the key decision-making unit. This core script also valorized patrilineality and patrilocality as ideal forms. As economic and political conditions have changed so radically in the past 150 years, households took actions aimed to ensure their success, by Lisu standards, that militated against the fixing of patrilineality as the dominant social form in the opium economy; when conditions changed again, patrilineality emerged in practice as well as in ancestor ritual and ideal social forms in the post-opium economy. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

Ethnic Relations and “Lisu” as Ethnicity

It is an axiom in mainland Southeast Asian studies that upland societies can not be understood outside of their relationships with their neighbors, especially with lowland or valley mountain valley kingdoms. This is still how we understand the marginal or peripheral nature of upland societies. The Lisu are a trans-regional people who have been tied into the web of political systems in northern mainland Southeast Asia as much as were the Kachin or Shan. Long-term historical interactions have resulted in commonalities in conceptions of symbolic power, as

pointed out by the founding ancestor of Southeast Asian anthropology, Edmund Leach (1965 [1954]) and by subsequent authors (e.g., Lehman 1963; Moerman 1965; Kirsch 1973). While ethnic identity is by no means the focus of this dissertation, it must be briefly discussed to understand the cultural frames through which the Lisu lived and my theoretical perspective in understanding the Lisu space in this web of relations.

The Lisu differed greatly from populations such as the Chin, Kachin, and Lue for which Leach's paradigm was fruitfully applied in that there was no hierarchical political (outside of the household) organization in the Lisu society of Thailand; unlike the *gumsa* Kachin vis-à-vis the Shan, the Lisu vis-à-vis the Thai and Chinese pointed to their fundamental difference, evidenced by their historical mythology of fleeing from the obligations of hierarchical polities. Even when, in the early 1990s, Lisu spoke of themselves in terms of subservience to encompassing powers – loss of opium, growing and marketing new crops, lacking land and valuables – there was little of political imitation or admiration; their identity was as people on the periphery, always seeking to avoid incorporation by the Chinese, the Shan, the Burmese, the Thai. In the late 1960s/early 1970s, the Lisu had lived “...as a frontier minority in relation to the lowland [Northern Thai], with whom they attempt[ed] to maintain minimal non-tributary relations free of conflict” (Dessaint 1972a). And if any one cultural value was an ethnic marker for Lisu, it was the importance put on and social practice based in ideas of autonomy once made possible by the production of opium for regional markets.

Defined by the Thai state as one of the “hill tribes” (Thai: *chaaw khaw*), the Lisu are marked by linguistic and cultural difference from the Thai majority and seen as dangerous outsiders. As such, they were neither citizens of Thailand nor legal holders of land within the borders of the Thai nation (Gillooly 2004). It is objectively true that the Lisu are migrants, that they came from someplace else – a someplace else that does not even exist in that form anymore – and that they were and mostly still are people who live peripherally to states. The Lisu agreed; they often identified themselves to me as people on the margins and their explanations of their

name as meaning people at loose ends, moving about, who had lost out, who had come down, as outlaws or rebels bespoke this, as did their plaintive songs of being people who had no home.

More frequently, in defining “Lisu-ness” they did so in relation to the people who politically encompassed them and these self-definitions shifted with social context, a pattern typical of upland-lowland relations in northern mainland Southeast Asia (Leach 1965 [1954]). That is, their explanations of themselves often took the form of an oppositional identity and became a left-handed valorization of Lisu-ness in relation to the often more powerful people with whom they had had contact over the course of their migration history. For instance, they defined themselves as “not Chinese” in that they did not smoke opium (Conrad 1989:216) and more recently as not Thai in that they did not get drunk² or “play with girls,” both observed characteristics of Thai men. Other points of discourse were that they did not engage in wage labor, unlike the Lahu and Chinese (especially addicts) or Shan refugees from Burma, or in petty trade, as did Chinese, Shan, or Northern Thai. The Lisu marked themselves by their work ethic (“If we don’t work, we don’t eat”), in contrast to Lahu, stigmatized as lazy, and Chinese, stereotyped as too smart to work hard. But for all of these oppositional or relational identity-makings, they had incorporated ritual practice and spirit members into the Lisu cosmology from the Chinese, Shan, Kachin, Northern Thai (Yuan or Khon Mueang)³ and recently Thai (Durrenberger 1989; Hutheesing 1990b; Tooker 1996). References to Chinese were dominant. For instance, at the New Year rituals, Lisu men sat me down to point out what elements of the ritual were allegedly Chinese; this was a point of pride, just as the fact that they did not smoke opium was a point of pride – in this they constructed themselves as a “model minority,” doing it better than the originators. Is this capitulation and assimilation, rituals of dispersion from an exemplary center, rituals of aggregation

²This was particularly remarkable as the Lisu had a long-standing reputation for drinking and drunkenness at wedding feasts and New Year festivities.

³ Northern Thailand was once a separate kingdom that dominated this region of mainland Southeast Asia; it was incorporated into what is now the kingdom of Thailand over the course of many decades starting in the early 20th century. The Northern Thai language, Kammueang, and Central/Standard Thai are not mutually understandable. D. Haigh Roop, one of my Thai language teachers at the University of Hawaii, described the relationship among Kammueang, Lao (Northeastern Thai) and Central Thai as that among Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian.

or incorporation that recognize the protective power and status of the “center” (Tooker 1996; Tambiah 1985), or a demonstration of civilization as the result of “civilizing projects” (Harrell 1995)? I can not say here but at different times and places the Lisu had been in such relationships to various more powerful regional polities with specific consequences for Lisu social and political organization. These included the Nakhi of Lijiang (Rock 1947) and other kingdoms in eastern Tibet (Samuel 1993; see Chapter 2).

By the 1990s in Thailand Lisu ethnic identity and its expression were in the midst of transformation as they were incorporated into a modern nation-state with a civilizing mission enacted by the Project. *Myi³-do⁵* was the generative principle of Lisu society, but this brought them in conflict as “anarchic” individuals with the Thai state and its representatives. Project staff denigrated the Lisu emphasis on “show” or status-display and argued that Lisu could continue to live in the mountain forests only if they gave up the pursuit of materialism and consumerism. Yet display was so fundamental to Lisu culture that Lisu would not be Lisu anymore if they adhered to Project philosophy. In fact, for all that the Thai state considered the ethnic Chinese a security risk so that they had great difficulty getting identity cards, local level development workers considered the Yunnanese Chinese to be model farmers and frequently stated that if only everyone were as careful and industrious as the Chinese then the Project would really progress.

In the end, the Lisu were increasingly defined by their relation with the Thai state in the form of the Project, particularly in their egalitarianism and concern with *myi³-do⁵*. Many of the features they claimed as Chinese in origin in fact seemed to originate from their ancestral region and relationships with Tibetan and Nakhi – the dancing and dress, for instance – but what was important for Lisu in emphasizing Chinese traits in Lisu society was that they had a tradition that was as old and honorable as anyone else’s, particularly vis-à-vis the Project. It allowed them to claim their legitimacy and equality to the Thai, and they did this in part by associating themselves with Chinese civilization.

These relational complexities were a part of the discursive practice (Giddens 1984) of Lisu, but should not be seen as the dominant part of their construction of self. Other traits were

less discursively marked but of far deeper significance in daily life, such as the generational and in-law food taboos (a daughter-in-law does not eat with her father-in-law or with the older brothers of their husband). Women in Revealed River were shocked and astounded that I had no such taboos and, therefore, so little means of showing respect to household members and demonstrating *myi³-do⁵*. Thus, there were simultaneous creations of being Lisu, one set oriented toward external societies and the other internal, assumptions about the nature of relationships and practice. This dissertation focuses on the latter.

The Thai State in Revealed River: The Sam Muen Highland Development Project

This is a study of a community encompassed by and embedded in a changing global system. It is impossible to understand Lisu in northern Thailand outside of the context of their history of dependence on world markets, e.g., opium, and their current relationship to that world through opium or its lack. The circumstances in which Lisu lived were undergoing such change that we must look at their connections outside of their community and depict the nature of those connections over time in order to understand Lisu society and culture today. The main interface by which uplanders experienced the changing world was a development projects. For the Lisu of Revealed River, this was the Sam-Muen Highland Development Project, which both brought about radical socioeconomic change due to forestry protection and the end of opium cultivation, and buffered some of the effects of this policy in the upland village of Revealed River.

The emerging Thai nation-state had passively ignored the hinterlands north of Chiang Mai until after World War II, when the confluence of the rise of Communist China, the war in Indochina, peasant unrest in Thailand, and international pressure to end the royal opium monopoly made the hinterlands and the people there a matter of national importance. These can be seen as problematizations, the ways that normative concepts defined the problems, the solution, and the means to solution. These problematizations progressed from security to drugs to watersheds. All of these discourses were expressions of the same underlying development strategy, occurring within the same discursive space (Escobar 1995:42) of creating the Thai nation as a unified body

(Winichakul 1994). Each problematization further elaborated Thai control of the mountains and of the people in them, validated as for the progress of the nation (Thai: *phuea kaan phatannaa chaat*; Gillogly 2004). The result on the ground for Lisu people was the interdiction of opium, their main cash crop, and the massive enclosure of the uplands as land was taken by the state for national parks and reserves.

From the early 1970s, opium control was the main focus of state and international projects in the highlands in the form of eradication carried out by various police and military forces, such as the Third Army Battalion and the Border Patrol Police. This strategy proved unworkable, not the least because of violent conflict as the livelihood of upland peoples was destroyed. Severe poverty and starvation often resulted from ending opium cultivation without alternatives (as can be seen today in Burma, *e.g.*, Jagan 2005; Kramer 2005), and humanitarian concerns gave rise to opium replacement programs to find cash crops that could be planted instead of opium. As it became clear that there no simple one-to-one replacement was possible, the programs were increasingly elaborated to research and development to find crops appropriate to the ecological conditions of northern Thailand, road-building to facilitate access to markets (opium buyers had gone to the villages themselves to buy the high-value crop, but with new commercial crops farmers had to get their own goods to market in a timely manner), and provision of inputs such as seeds, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers for the new crops. By the 1980s, the Thai state had penetrated the northern uplands on its borders. In the most “successful” cases of agricultural change, swathes of commercial crops in semi-permanent fields overtook mountain slopes. These fields, the chemical inputs, and the roads all resulted in spectacular environmental destruction in parts of northern Thailand due to facilitation of illegal logging when roads opened up previously inaccessible mountains, erosion from the fields and roads, and downstream pollution from upland commercial monocropping (Ziegler *et al.* 2004). This has given rise to intense upland-lowland conflict over control of natural resources (*e.g.*, Pungprasert 1989; Kaeothep, Sewatamara and Vichitporn 1991; Ganjanapan 1998; Laungaramsri 1998; Lohmann 1999;

Bangkok Post 2000b; Rajah 2005; Siriphon 2006). The successive problematization of uplands peoples shifted to environmental destruction, which corresponded with the international environmental movement. In the mid-1980s, the Thai state established the watershed classification system for all of Thailand's land resources, thereby effectively alienating all uplanders from living on and using the mountain lands of northern Thailand. This was the culmination of a process of institutionalization begun in the 1940s based on Thai models of rulership that made all land in the kingdom the king's land. These formalized laws excluded people in favor of logging concessions that generated income for the government. It made it impossible for many rural people to gain legal title to the land they worked, and set punishments of 1-7 years of imprisonment and fines of 5 to 5,000 *baht* for cutting forest that were ruinous for small-scale farmers (Cooper 1984:260; Ganjanaphan 1987; Wun'Gaeo 1992:14, 19). Watershed classifications marked the importance of each piece of land in the watershed on the basis of slope, elevation, and vegetation cover; all land above 1000 meters was classified as 1A watershed land on which no human use or habitation was allowed. These laws brought most of the north under the control of the Royal Forest Department (RFD) and forest reserves and national parks were established throughout the north. The north was both mountainous and the main repository of forest in Thailand, thus a significant watershed for the Central Plains where the most rice was grown, the single most important export in the Thai economy. In addition, the capital city Bangkok, its largest city, a regional financial center and currently the world's 32nd largest city, had great need of electricity generated by hydropower. Protecting watersheds therefore also protected urban development. The consequence of these land policies fell disproportionately on northern farmers, and in the case of the "hill tribes" their vulnerability was exacerbated by their status as cultural and political outsiders. All upland peoples became illegal settlers, vulnerable to police brutality and eviction (Eudey 1989; Pungprasert 1989). While it was recognized that it was impossible to relocate all upland peoples, the state (through the RFD)

attempted to end swiddening, associated with opium and forest destruction, and long considered a security concern because it enabled the mobility of swiddening peoples.

In the 1980s, the Highland Development Master Plan organized the plethora of projects run by different arms of the Thai government with various forms of bilateral and multilateral funding active in northern Thailand. The Sam Muen Highland Development Project (SMHDP, hereafter the Project) was initiated as an integrated highland development project to coordinate local development projects and also in reaction to the punitive and piecemeal intervention typical of earlier projects. The main purpose of the Project was to end swiddening and opium cultivation, and in this it had been successful. Thirty Thousand had once been the most productive poppy-growing area in the north, which was why it was made a “key village” cluster in the new integrated approach to drug control and deforestation. Activities included Mountain Schools for literacy in the Thai language, registration of households and granting of legal residency or citizenship to upland minority peoples, forest and wildlife conservation, as well as agricultural development for opium replacement. The Project was under the control of the Royal Forest Department (RFD) Division of Watershed Development coordinating projects by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (opium eradication), US-AID (Mountain Schools) and various other government agencies (*e.g.*, the Ministries of the Interior, Education, Health, different divisions of the RFD, and departments of the Ministry of Agriculture). All villages were also under the authority of the Thai Third Army Battalion, which made periodic sweeps through the area to control illegal activities from distilling rice whiskey to cultivating opium and to arrest “traffickers” (local farmers transporting opium, often their own crop); until shortly before I settled in Revealed River, soldiers were posted in the village for anti-opium security. They also took “addicts” off to Army boot camps to rehabilitate them. By the early 1990s, while drug trafficking was still considered to be a problem⁴ – Thirty Thousand was part of the territory of the notorious drug lord Khun Sa⁵ and there

⁴When I arrived in Revealed River, teachers and UN workers pointed out several points on the surrounding hills where there were supposed to be heroin labs and paths by which drugs were transported and, indeed, late at night lights could be seen moving on ridges where there were no

were several shoot-outs between the Army or the Border Patrol Police and drug caravans during my stay – opium had largely been eradicated within the borders of the Project and forest cover increased. The Project was considered highly successful because of decrease in population mobility; decrease in opium cultivation; decrease in area under cultivation; and clear involvement of and responsibility by upland villagers in devising and maintaining land use plans for their community. The Project personnel also proudly pointed to higher rates of blue cards (identity cards for resident aliens), household registration, and citizenship among uplanders in the Project area, although it had been unsuccessful in gaining formal land rights for minority villagers.

Given the success of the Project in reducing opium and increasing forest in Thirty Thousand, Revealed River became a model village, frequently hosting officials from Bangkok to observe the Project's successes so that forestry officials could lobby for continued funding and extension of their control of northern territories. One of the few English terms I taught both Lisu and Thai was "dog and pony show," to talk about the constant meetings to display their adherence to national goals, a performance of their model citizen behavior in a nation that denied them citizenship. The individualistic and independent Lisu were praised for their 'self-sacrifice' (Thai: *sia sala*) for the good of the Thai nation. The Project was so perfectly an expression of Thai state policy that shortly after I arrived at site in 1991, the Project was made the model for all upland watershed conservation projects in northern Thailand as the Accelerated Watershed Reforestation Project (Gillogly 2002; Gillogly 2004; see also Pugnier 2002 a; Pugnier 2002 b).

villages. One village in the cluster and another at the entrance to the protected area in which the cluster was located were particular villages in which households were involved in the drug trade. Most of the opium was produced in Burma, but it was refined into heroin in mobile labs all along the border with Burma, as heroin was easier to transport. Drugs were transported from other countries, particularly Burma, through Thailand due to its superior infrastructure and international connections.

⁵One February, the elder men Revealed River complained that they were expected to go to Burma to pay honor to Khun Sa and attend a New Year ceremony at the Forestry Center at the same time. The headman sent a family member in his stead. In the early 1990s, Khun Sa was still too powerful to ignore.

The Project was unique in that it was underpinned by an integrated, consistent Buddhist philosophy. The head of the Project, Khun Pakorn, was a forester. He attempted to end conflict between foresters and the Lisu by introducing cut flowers as a new cash crop that would allow the Lisu farmers better return on less land. When that failed due to market forces, farmers increased their acreage of cash crops to make up in quantity for the high prices lost. Forest was being destroyed again and farmers were unable to satisfy their needs. With this, the Head experienced an epiphany. A devout Buddhist, he redefined the problem in the hills as a desire for material things. The head devised a diverse mix of annual and perennial crops that would provide steady income the year round on a limited amount of land carefully selected to conserve particular local watersheds and discourage most monocropping and contract agriculture. His essential philosophy was simple needs simply fulfilled for security and sustainability. He knew that Lisu farmers depended on the income from cash crops such as opium to buy rice (Durrenberger 1983a; Cooper 1984), but focused rather on their status display at marriage, feasts, and of silver jewelry. He resolved to turn people from accumulation (spoken of as profit) and display to subsistence, self-reliance, and moderation. This was congruent with Thai Buddhist middle-class interpretations of the “middle path,” of moderation through reducing desire, and with romanticized views of rural communities as inward looking and economically self-sufficient (e.g., Khonkhai 1982; Ekachai 1990; Nartsupha 1991; Nartsupha 1999; Singh 1998); it undoubtedly appealed greatly to the policymakers who adopted this program for regional implementation. It was also highly assimilationist.

A philosophy less congruent with the Lisu worldview can hardly be imagined, living as members of a culture grounded in kin relations and status displays through marriage prestations and ancestor worship ceremonies. In a cultural world as aggressively egalitarian as that of the Lisu, every person's *repute* (*myi³-do⁵*) had to be jealously guarded and constantly demonstrated through status display (Durrenberger 1983b). A key locus of demonstration of *myi³-do⁵* was marriage payments, and these required accumulation of surplus. Under the paternalistic regime

of the Project, this was redefined as mere greed and vanity. There was a pervasive current of resentment among the Lisu of Revealed River against Project philosophy, while at the same time public accord with Project practices.

Why then did the Lisu of Revealed River cooperate? There were a number of reasons for compliance, some voluntary and intentional, and some compelled. One was that people saw worse alternatives. In everyday conversations, people spoke of the poverty of other Lisu villages – the loss of land; soil erosion and drying up of streams; debt due to contract cropping; young men involved as mules in the drug trade, lost to jail or addiction; young women involved in the sex trade, lost to discos or AIDS; and the constant insecurities about today and tomorrow. In this context, villagers in the Project, although they felt poor by their own standards, felt relatively secure.

Another element was that the Project implemented a participatory approach to forest protection as a response to the pervasive antagonism between foresters and upland farmers. A Cornell-trained anthropologist, Dr. Uraivan Tan-Kim-Yong, developed a methodology called Participatory Land-Use Planning (PLP) as a mechanism to develop collaboration among local farmers, agricultural extension agents, and foresters in identifying the specific needs of each locality (Tan-Kim-Yong 1992; Tan-Kim-Yong, Limchoowong and Gillogly 1994). This was decentralized planning, as opposed to the watershed classification system created in the capital that had removed the entire uplands of northern Thailand from productive use on the basis of large scale maps. Looked at in detail and with local knowledge of hydrology, many upland valleys were clearly appropriate for cultivation. The characteristics of PLP were that community development workers lived in villages for a year or more so that farmers could build personal relationships with them and the workers could learn about local farmers' environmental and agricultural knowledge. This was followed by a process of jointly building 3-D land use maps that allowed foresters and villagers to construct the vocabulary and social relationships necessary to facilitate communication and understanding of each others' ideas. Finally a mutually agreed upon

land use plan was formulated, rather than a plan that foresters imposed on villagers. While the Project and other government agents had more power in this relationship, PLP was designed to negate standard power relations by making the voice of the villagers equal to that of state officials. At least it ensured that the participants knew each other and were bound in ties of reciprocity, creating social webs, rather than preserving polarized positions born of linguistic and cultural difference.

Inherent in this was the Project's commitment that if villagers enforced watershed protection themselves, they would be able to stay on their land. In fact, extension workers often told Revealed River villagers that this was the case and pointed to recent examples of military violence against local people in Thailand as evidence of the Project's role in protecting them. The implied promise and threat was that Lisu adherence would decrease government interference in their daily subsistence decisions. This had been proven to them when Revealed River declared itself an opium-free village, sending the "addicts" (elderly smokers who used opium to alleviate the pains of arthritis and other ills of old age) out of the village; in response, the Project convinced the Third Army to pull its soldiers out of Revealed River. In their public allegiance to the Project, Lisu villagers of Revealed River sought to reclaim place and autonomy, rather than oppose outside domination (*cf.* Steinberg and Clark 1999). They recognized that the marginality that they valued as a key part of their self-identify made them vulnerable and they made use of the Project as a resource in their right to survive. In some ways the Project offered solutions to problems they faced as a result of the interdiction of opium and swiddening, but they had been enveloped into Thai structures of incorporation through their cooperation with unintended consequences.

The state was experienced most directly in Revealed River through the policies and practices of the Project. While cultural assimilation was a *de facto* activity of the Project, in this dissertation I focus on the elements of opium control and swidden cessation and their consequences for household and kinship organization. Opium interdiction had gutted the economic basis of Lisu society in northern Thailand, all the more significant in that their social

structure was historically formed by opium growing. I discuss how this came about in Chapter 2. Opium interdiction brought about constriction of economic resources and the need to adapt, on the household level, to the requirements of the post-opium economy, discussed in Chapter 4. The loss of land due to RFD control of the uplands had specific consequences for Lisu social structure as it made land a scarce resource, something that was valuable and inheritable, and this had specific consequences for kinship and marriage practices. I discuss this in Chapter 5. Lisu cultural principles supported both unstable villages and highly independent households, and stable villages and cohesive kin organization, in this case, localized patrilineages. Which sort of organization predominated depended on economic and political conditions; current conditions of increasing resource scarcity supported strong localized lineages.

Methods

I carried out this research from January 1991 to May of 1994. I spent the first six weeks in Thailand carrying out archival research in the library of Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok), the main research library in Thailand and repository of much 'grey' literature (unpublished field reports, for instance). I also carried out archival research at the Resources Management and Development office, location of the Upland Social Forestry Project Pilot Project that had developed Participatory Land-Use Planning, in the Social Sciences Faculty, as well as the library of the Hill Tribes Research Institute of Chiang Mai University. At the same time, I carried out the usual meetings with local experts to discuss possible field sites and visited potential sites. I was aware that development and forestry projects were everywhere in the mountains of northern Thailand. I sought, therefore, to find an interesting development project to study as well as an interesting Lisu village. The Sam Muen Highland Development Project was one of the most significant projects in northern Thailand. However, I was not allowed to choose my own research site within the Project's territory. The uplands forestry projects were politically sensitive at that time, in part because of social protest against forestry projects in other regions of Thailand and in

part because of massive protests against a military coup and resultant massacre that had taken place shortly after I arrived in Thailand. In addition, authorities were concerned about possible on-going drug trafficking; clearly, having an American woman walk into a dangerous situation would have been embarrassing for the Project and the Thai government. I was sent to Revealed River as a “model” village that would show the Project at its best, not the least because Revealed River had recently declared itself opium free.

Revealed River was part of a cluster of Lisu villages, the largest being Thirty Thousand itself, the “key village” in this first and largest of highland development projects. Thirty Thousand was a large and chaotic village, and I rarely visited except for weddings and funerals. The main focus of my research was Revealed River, with frequent visits to its small satellite village Resting House River; the village some Revealed River founders had come from, Spring Village, and its two satellite villages. I also visited single household settlements in the forests where expelled elderly opium addicts lived. However, I was also obligated to spend a certain amount of time at the forestry center, and so I studied the culture and personnel of the Project as well, although I write little about that here.

In early 1994, I spent a several months carrying out an evaluation of Participatory Land-Use Planning for the Project Coordinating Office of the United Nations Drug Control Programme/Northern Thailand with Dr. Uraivan Tan-Kim-Yong of Chiang Mai University and the Upland Social Forestry Pilot Project and Samer Limcheewong, head of the Sam Muen Highland Development Project. For that, we visited the Wiang Pha Highland Development Project and Doi Luang National Park as well as sites within the territory of the Sam Muen Highland Development Project. This gave me interesting comparative information on the nature of change in northern Thailand and the ways in which different projects, with their organizational cultures, stimulated different types of change than I had observed in the SMHDP.

Other important sources and contacts were a group of ‘hill tribe’ youth who were attending or had attended Chiang Mai University or Payap University who had established an NGO called

the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT), an offshoot of the Southeast Asian Mountain Peoples, Culture and Development Programs (SEAMP). I visited several upland villages in Chiang Rai with them. One of these was “See the Tiger” Village in Chiang Rai, the site of Otome Klein Hutheesing’s research. I also worked with various colleagues in the Faculty of Agriculture’s Multiple Cropping Center, many of whom I had worked with for years through the interdisciplinary Southeast Asian Universities Agroecosystems Network. Finally, in early 1994 I travelled to Lijiang, Yunnan, China with Dr. Uraivan for preliminary research for a study of ecotourism she was planning.

As I was studying long term change and continuity in Lisu social structure from the opium to the post-opium economies, I studied the published work and field notes of Paul Durrenberger, Alain Dessaint, and Otome Klein Hutheesing. Paul Durrenberger kindly gave me access to his fieldnotes. Otome Hutheesing visited Revealed River with me; and several years later, I visited See The Tiger with her for New Year. I have benefitted much from her enthusiasm and deep knowledge of the Lisu. These sources provided a significant portion of the historical comparisons as Paul Durrenberger and Alain Dessaint studied Lisu at the apex of the opium economy and Hutheesing studied the disintegration of Lisu society and culture as opium was replaced by contract commercial farming and heroin trafficking. In 2003 and 2004, I carried out archival research based on English and French sources into the history of Lisu in Yunnan and Burma in an effort to understand the prior text of Lisu society before opium and their social organization in relation to other Tibeto-Burman societies. This ballooned into a massive historical chapter of 300 pages which eventually became Chapter 2. All of this might appear to be “too” archival, a mere survey of preceding literature. However, Evans-Pritchard is reported to have said that all anthropology turns into social history so I feel justified in turning historical documents into sources for anthropology. More importantly, I believe that it is essential that we incorporate the documentary information already available to us rather than reinventing ourselves each decade.

While I have studied continuity and change in Lisu social structure, I have not in fact actually observed these changes myself over a long period of time. As Dwyer and Minnegal have pointed out, tales of sequential change are vulnerable to error due to the “fallacy of the primal exemplar and the fallacy of the preconceived end point” (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999:379). In fact, Revealed River, and the other villages of Thirty Thousand were in the midst of change when I observed them. There was a never-ending flux of strategies, possibilities, options, opinions, risks, failures, and successes. I compared villages in different times and places, with little connecting point among them except the commonality of changes in the mountains. What I do have is several sources of information from different periods of Lisu life that point towards these emergent patterns.

This is not a quantitative study. There were severe political problems with counting of households and fields. As one Lisu college-educated woman said to me, “We Lisu don’t count. Just don’t ask about numbers. We don’t count, so we don’t know. But everyone thinks we’re liars.” More significantly, the collection of quantitative data was politically loaded in Revealed River. The United Nations, US-AID, the Thai government, and the Sam Muen Highland Development Project had all counted the Lisu in this area for some time, and the people of Revealed River perceived this counting as a means of control over them. For those who want it, there was an abundance of statistical data of varying reliability. But what I tried to understand were the mechanisms of change, its internal dynamics, and people’s strategies in conditions of change, rather than statistical trajectories. Statistical work can show the correlation of types of kinship and intensity of land use (*e.g.*, Frechione and Scaglione 1981), but can not show mechanisms. I looked, rather, at the interplay of units of action, here the household, the lineage, and state policies. Specifically, this research examined the consequences of economic change for household relationships and kin networks, and the role of social structure in adaptation to new agricultural conditions.

Conclusion

This is a study of political ecology and globalization. Lisu have been embedded in global capitalism almost since the inception of global capitalism, if we see the profits from the opium trade as the beginning of modern capitalism (Trocki 1999). Chapter 2 is about how northern Thailand Lisu society was historically constructed, focusing on how Lisu society took different forms under different political economic conditions, particularly with the introduction of opium as a cash crop. Opium had enmeshed the Lisu into a global economy. They were small-scale producers, therefore at the lowest and most dependent level in the global economic system. They provided raw materials to colonial powers and purchased a small amount of manufactured goods (cash from opium was used to buy rice to feed the household as much as to buy cloth and household supplies). The Lisu did not openly experience their dependency, the disequilibrium and shattering of integrity, associated with their structural position in globalization. In fact, opium enabled Lisu to maintain their autonomy. This was in part because they generally did not consume their main cash crop (and not consuming opium was an important marker of their ethnic identity, so it can be seen as related to their defining trait of independence). According to Dessaint, it was due to the importance of cash as a medium of exchange, the convertibility of their prestige goods (silver), and the fact that they depended on the Chinese as commercial intermediaries (Dessaint 1972a:186-89). The inherent illegality of opium as a cash crop was also congruent with their history of marginality to regional polities, enabling them to maintain the 'outsiderness' that was at the base of their independence. International narcotics policy and Thai implementation of that policy in keeping with the state agenda of incorporating the northern hinterlands fundamentally changed the ways in which Lisu interacted with local polities and peoples. The social structure of the Lisu, despite their 'isolation' and 'independence,' was historically constructed through involvement in global economic systems, but as growers of narcotics, narcotics ultimately served as the reason and the means for the envelopment of Lisu in to the Thai state. This was the irony of their autonomy.

As the Lisu were integrated into the global polity and economy through the filter of Thai national economy and policy, pre-existing Lisu social structures motivated people to choose certain strategies over others when faced with the end of the opium economy and involvement in global markets through other means. This research had two objectives. One was a theoretical problem, to explain both social transformations and continuity over time. The other was to fill an empirical gap in the literature on the relationship between social and economic change, particularly to discover the locus of adaptation to global forces. This research is significant in its attempt to unite research in current social theory with agricultural development issues. Development projects and ideology pervade northern Thailand. No villager or "hill tribe" can carry out their life outside of this context of development projects. We need to understand the agency of the people who experience globalization locally.

Research in this project area provided information on the specific social and cultural effects of a project that was not only the dominant model for development in the whole of northern Thailand, but was being disseminated to other Asian countries. Thus, it adds the body of anthropological knowledge of learning to make our knowledge relevant to the very real problems of environmental degradation and social disintegration consequent upon rapid economic change throughout the world. Study of the Project became a necessary element in this research. Although I have written very little about it here, it was a driving force in the lived experience of the Lisu of Revealed River.

The Lisu have experienced globalization through their involvement in global markets for over 150 years. This has had profound consequences for their social structure. This social structure has revolved around key structural principles so that Lisu appear to have maintain a sense of coherent social structure despite considerable political and economic change. Social change occurred along particular fault lines – they were always answering the same questions, even if with different resources and answers, resulting in unintended consequences. But their

main concern seemed always to be their family and household relations, and that is the focus of what follows.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF LISU SOCIETY

The Problem Regarding Lisu Regional Ethnography

Historical accounts of Lisu in western Yunnan vary considerably in how the Lisu are characterized. They are labeled as allegiant warriors, barbarous mercenaries, and craven cowards; they had chiefs, they were so egalitarian they murdered anyone with pretensions to dominate them, they had slaves. The question arises – which of these are the “true” Lisu? The paradox continues. On a trip to the Naxi town of Lijiang in northwestern Yunnan Province in 1994, Naxi villagers showed their New Year’s circle dances, and I recognized the melodies and the steps. The tempo was faster, the steps more complex, but music and dance were unmistakably the same as Lisu New Year’s dances. That which marked the Lisu in Thailand as conspicuously different and out-of-place people was part and parcel of regional cultural patterns in western Yunnan. Even stranger was that over 150 years’ time and 500 miles’ migration, through different political regimes and profound economic transformations, over the roughest of terrains that militated against continued contact with previous populations, ran this thread of cultural continuity.

Given the marked relational character of ethnicity in Southeast Asia, how have the Lisu remained “Lisu” despite comprehensive changes in the encompassing political and economic systems in which they lived? Despite the contingent nature of social relations, something remained constant in how people lived their lives. Social transformation is not absolute; people are not automatons, cogs in the wheel of the world system changing to suit conditions. It is necessary to delineate what remains when other things change in order to discover the commonality; societies have their own structure, a fixed compass point around which they oscillate. However, the structure is not a coherent, integrated whole; there are inherent

contradictions within the structure of each society and it is along these fault lines that change is most likely to occur. In fact, there were multiple compass points.

Lisu social forms were kaleidoscopic and each way I turned the pattern shifted, although the same elements made up the patterns. The situation of Lisu in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia provides an excellent landscape for the study of change and continuity in Lisu society given the profound transformations in political economy in the twentieth century. To situate these processes, I will explicate a prior text from which Lisu living in Thailand have worked, a text written into Lisu culture from the practices and adaptations to the conditions of those who preceded them, those who taught their children and grandchildren what to do to survive as Lisu people in a constantly shattering and tumultuous world. A key element to understanding this prior text is to understand the power relations of the place from which their forebears came, Yunnan and Burma, where they lived before moving to Thailand, the ways in which power was understood in a specific cultural framework, and how people acted within that in order to live.

The society of Lisu populations has been flexible and adaptive throughout its history in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. Before their migration southwards to northern Thailand, Lisu were a people found primarily in the far west of Yunnan and the east of northern Burma. This was an extensive region marked by environmental and political diversity. The Lisu were a non-state people but their relations with states were salient in the forms of their social and political structure. Sociopolitical forms and ethnic expression – the means by which they marked social position and boundaries – altered in different contexts. Modes of production varied depending on the environmental conditions of the places in which they lived and the economic resources to which they had access. Identity as “Black” or “White” Lisu, marked by dress and political organization, were related to relations to Chinese or Tibetan cultural and political models. Lisu related to local states (or the local arms of more distant empires) as brigands or mercenaries, as independent and “wild” or peaceful and “civilized.”

With the transformation of regional trade and political power in western Yunnan in the Western colonial period, Lisu populations imbricated in these structures underwent a transformation. The main means of this was the introduction of opium as a cash crop. Opium introduced a resource that altered the dynamics of Lisu society, shifting toward household autonomy and migration as key elements of social structure. In these conditions, other social structures such as localized patrilineages and village institutions attenuated. Lisu peoples' strategies in late twentieth century northern Thailand arose in part from prior structures of inequality from which they sought escape and redress; they pursued answers to existing problems using the strategies at their disposal throughout shifting conditions.

My goal in this chapter is to situate the Lisu in terms of historical political and economic relations that have created the structures and practices by which they met state and global intervention in Thailand in the 1990s. Who the Lisu are in Thailand arises out of who they were in western Yunnan and northern Burma. This is "centering the periphery"; I am examining Lisu people as part of an active cultural and geographic region rather than simply as outsiders and objects of Thai state development problematizations.

Locations and Geographical Groupings

Distribution

People called or self-identified as Lisu (with awareness that this ethnolinguistic category has been historically constructed) live from the Upper Salween in northwestern Yunnan bordering Tibet in the north down to northern Thailand in the south, to Putao (Nam Tamai, Upper Burma) bordering India in the west and Wuding, Yunnan in the east. They were most commonly found along the Yunnan-Burma frontier in from Weixi down to Simao and in Burma followed the same line from Putao/Nam Tamai down to the Southern Shan States (Fraser 1922:v; Leach 1965:309). By the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth centuries, the core area of Lisu settlement was in the Upper Salween (Nu River) between roughly 25° 30' and 27° 30', and practically the

whole population of the Salween Valley between 26° and 27° 30' was Lisu. There were also significant Lisu populations on the upper slopes of the Salween-Mekong Divide and the Mekong-Yangtze Divide in Weixi County; straddling the boundary between southern Sichuan and northwestern Yunnan; and on the Nmai Hka (an eastern branch of the Irrawaddy) in Burma (Forrest 1908:261; Fraser 1922:iii; Davies 1909:391-2; Daniels 1994). Populations in eastern Burma were more recent, however. Not all of these are equally long-standing populations. Those in India, for instance, migrated there in 1942. Clearly, not all of these people dispersed widely across the landscape could be “the same” people. However, a shared history or past contiguity at one time is implied by their linguistic relatedness. What is interesting, therefore, is that these were not an isolated group attached to one territory.

Aside from the Upper Salween area, Lisu were non-contiguously settled across western Yunnan (Rock 1947:124) and northeastern Burma. A substantial population lived north of 28° N on the Salween River south of Tra-mu-tang and north of Weixi, and in Kham (Eastern Tibet), just south of or mixed with “Massa”⁶ and Tibetan-speaking people (Baber 1882:72; Davies 1909:124; Kingdon-Ward 1986:196; d’Orleans 1896:302). Another significant population was located north and east of Tengchong (known at the time as T’eng-yuëh or Momien) and Lisu lived as far west of the Salween as Bhâmo (Davies 1909:391). Bradley states that Tengchong is adjacent to Nujiang and the likely source of Lisu migration into Nujiang, moving upriver (Bradley, p.c., February 2005). They were also reported in Kengtung (Shan States, Burma) (Rose and Brown 1911:258). Lisu were reported as far south as “Kianghung-gyee” and the mountains east of Yungchan according to Anderson (1871:135-6). By 1900, Lisu were reported as far east as Wuding (25° 33' N, 102° 38' ?E). By the 1920s, a small population of Lisu had moved far west to the Myitkyina Plains on the Irrawaddy (Fraser 1922:vii).⁷ The population in Thailand is the southernmost one. One Lisu informant claimed his village was first established 150 years ago, but the earliest

⁶ In fact, Moso or Naxi (Bradley, p.c., February 2005).

⁷ Bhâmo and Myitkyina were part of the Kachin State after the British took over (Leach 1965:44).

verifiable date is that villages were established by Lisu in the 1890s (Hanks and Hanks 2001:78, 80), although Bradley puts the date as 1918 (Bradley, p.c., February 2005).

Geographical Groupings: North, Central, and South

Lisu lived in villages scattered over a wide area, exhibiting a pattern in which groups of Lisu with distinct linguistic and political features were clustered over the landscape while, characteristically for Northern Mainland Southeast Asia, surrounded by other non-state upland peoples and by lowland peoples who were part of a local state or an empire. In northwestern Yunnan, Lisu were surrounded by Tibetan and Naxi lowlanders; in the central region, their neighbors to the east were Chinese, Yi, and Bai; and toward the southern part of their distribution in Yunnan, their neighbors were Lalo, Lahu, Wa, Kachin, and Shan (Davies 1909:307). The Tibetans, Naxi, Chinese, and Shan were lowland state societies of greatly varying levels of complexity, but all in position to militarily, politically, and culturally control or dominate uplanders such as the Lisu.

Their relations with neighboring groups structured economic, political and ritual practices, and expression of ethnicity. In addition, naming and categorization were projects of empire. State interactions with people on the fringes of the state were ruled through categorization that allowed territories to be claimed and peoples to ruled effectively in keeping with their “character.” As such, inter-ethnic relations organized knowledge and the use of ethnonyms. What we know of Lisu and other non-state peoples historically comes through the documentation of agents of the states – Tibetan, Chinese, and colonial (in this case British) commentators – who described them through their own frames of knowledge by which people on the fringes were assessed as to their degree of civilization. The extent to which Lisu societies actually adhered to these frames of governance and civilization varied. I will discuss these frames and naming in a later section. For now, I summarize the ways in which Lisu societies differed from place to place in terms of geographic location and their contiguity to and involvement with neighboring states. Given limits in

understanding of the cultural and political construction of ethnonyms, there were three broad populations of Lisu – North, Central, and South – marked by local variations in language, dress, political organization, and types of agriculture.

North Lisu

Explorers such as Desgodins remarked the independent character of Lisu they met south of Tibet (Baber 1882:72), where they were in their “natural, primitive state” in the Salween Valley north of 26° 30'. These were the Black Lisu. The Black Lisu were marked by not speaking Chinese, wearing hempen clothes, frequent feuding among villages, and often not having a village headman (Forrest 1908:250, 254)⁸ as well as exhibiting “Tibetan” characteristics (Kingdon-Ward 1986:176). They, along with Tibetans and Independent Lolos of western Sichuan, Wa, and rural Naxi, were noted as maintaining their dress, language, and customs in the face of Chinese assimilatory forces (Davies 1909:368, 391-2). These features were particularly true of Lisu living on the west bank of the Salween, on the Irrawaddy divide (Forrest 1908:252-54). However, in the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries a significant population of fiercely independent Lisu lived to the south of Kangpu and Yezhi⁹.

To the east, the Lisu along the Mekong River between 27° and 29° were described as timid (d'Orleans 1896:136). Lisu on the east of the Salween toward the Mekong were considered more peaceable and prosperous even when not under Chinese rule; the land in which they lived there was also less severe and more fertile (Forrest 1908:252-254). They were under the protection of other polities. They may have been a more assimilated population; influenced by Chinese frames, European explorers' assessments of degrees of timidity and fierceness were often congruent with degrees of assimilation to Chinese culture. These populations of Lisu were

⁸Eric Mueggler (personal communication, September 15, 2006) points out that Forrest traveled with a British officer whose remit was to make a case for British control of the region and thus was predisposed to find evidence of lack of functional political authority and resultant chaos.

⁹These were *tusi* domains in the Weixi Prefecture of Yunnan (Gros 1996; Gros 2001) (Yezhi being at approximately 27° 50' and 29°).

susceptible to raids by the independent Lisu to their west. These were White Lisu. The categorical opposition between peaceful, civilized White Lisu and warlike, independent Black Lisu was highly marked (Ch'en 1947:258).

There was a small eastward population of Lisu in Sanyingpan (26°, 102° 30') or Yong-bei Ting (26° 45', 100° 45') (Davies 1909:392), which was east of Lijiang. This is the region noted in Daniels' (1994) report of a Lisu uprising in 1821. However, Bradley points out that these may in fact have been the linguistically closely related Lipo, a group called 'Eastern Lisu' by Fraser and other missionaries, who were heavily Sinicized (2005). This is just south of Shigu, a Naxi area north of Lijiang at an oxbow in the Yangtze River, and thus was a population more exposed to Chinese immigration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The furthest eastern points were eastern settlements at Yuanma (approximately 25° 40', 101° 50') (Enriquez 1921:74), Sanyingpan (approximately 26°, 102°) and Wuding (25° 30' N, 102° 20') (Rose and Brown 1911:257). These, too, were Lipo, a distinct but closely related language to Lisu and very sinicized (Bradley, p.c., February 2005; Fraser 1922:xi). Lisu were even reported as far west as the Assam-Burma border (Rose and Brown 1911:257, citing Young 1907), in the Akyang Valley, Putao, and Nam Tamai, directly opposite the northern core area of Lisu in Yunnan (Enriquez 1921:70, 72; Leach 1965:51-52). In the years following the Burmese independence and Chinese Communist control of China, Christian Lisu took advantage of these connections to move to Arunachal Pradesh and live there today (Maitra 1993; Hazarika 2004). However, these populations of "Black" Lisu were more recent migrations.

Central Lisu

Further south, below 26° 30', Lisu were more Sinicized in clothes and forms of governance. More people, generally *tusi* and their families, spoke Chinese (Davies 1909:391-2; Forrest 1908:244, 247). Davies thought it probable that the upper part of the Shwe-li or Longjiang Rivers north of Tengchong (25°, 98° 30') was once inhabited by Lisu who had "become" Chinese

(Davies 1909:391). Zhengjia (Chengjia or Cheng-ka) was the farthest point north where there was any real Chinese authority through native *tusi*. From 25° 50' to 26° 30', *tusi* were more powerful, claimed a history of being Chinese who had “turned” Lisu, and Lisu who appeared to be “mixed” with Chinese (Forrest 1908:244), in the discourse of racial categories of British observers.

To the west, Lisu were found scattered in small communities throughout the Kachin Hills, east of the Irrawaddy, Upper Burma, and as far south as 23° 40' (well south of Bhâmo). In general, the Lisu in Burma extended directly west of the main southwest area of Lisu populations in Yunnan, particularly across from Tengchong, which was the furthest outpost of Chinese administration and settlement, a Chinese island in the midst of non-Han people (Rose and Brown 1911:250). Further south, in Burma, Sinicized Lisu lived in smaller and less powerful communities interspersed among Kachins. Often engaged in intermarriage and political relations with the Kachin, Lisu lineages were incorporated into Kachin kinship and clan structure so that Kachin kinship networks were extended to embrace Lisu speakers. In one village southeast of Bhâmo (on the border with Yunnan, across from Tengchong), one of the eight lineages was a Lisu lineage, the other being speakers of Jinghpaw, Gauri, Maru, Atsi, and Chinese (Leach 1965:59, 88). Some Lisu considered themselves to be a part of Kachin (Bradley, p.c., February 2005).

South Lisu

Still further south, there were Lisu in the Northern Shan States (south of 24° N) and, until the colonial government created an arbitrary administrative separation, all of the people of this linguistically polyglot territory were dependencies of one of the local Shan chiefs of *saopha* or *sawbwa* (Leach 1965:51) (the Thai cognate is *jaofaa*, meaning literally lord of the sky). Finally, in an area of irrigated rice terraces between Mogok in the south up to the confluence of the Nam (Tamai) and Mehkla Rivers between Sadon (25° 15' N) and Namkhan (south of 24° N), east of Tengchong, there lived a highly Sinicized population of Lisu with roots in Tengchong (Leach 1965:52). Lisu in the Kachin Valley wore dress that resembled that of Chinese-Shans except for

“Lisu” features such as the bag, turban, earrings, and necklaces of the women (Anderson 1871:136). In other respects, they were considered very Chinese – they smoked opium, kept Chinese New Year, the men spoke Chinese, and they intermarried with the “hill Chinese” or “Haw” traders – despite being relatively remote from Chinese territory. This was in Möng Ka, a staging post on the route from Sadon to Tengchong (Leach 1965:39), so again a Sinicized population with roots in Tengchong. These were the “Flowery” or patterned/striped Lisu. The Lisu of northern Thailand largely originated from this southern population.

Summary

In summary, from north to south along the Salween, Lisu were increasingly in contact with and influenced by Chinese markets and administration (Rose and Brown 1911:251). In the south-central parts of Lisu distribution, they were more directly under Chinese administration (Enriquez 1921:72). These were the White Lisu, a more assimilated population. Lisu in the far northwest were considered the “core” population, independent or Black Lisu, although they, too, had migrated there in about 1760 (Bradley, p.c., February 2005 b). They were less under Chinese control and more imbricated in Tibetan ritual and political relations until at least the late nineteenth century. However, the nature of warfare and the ebb and flow of the power of various states often meant the Northern Lisu were not effectively incorporated into the rule of Naxi or Tibetan polities, even if partaking of the common Tibetan conceptual substratums, especially the cultural and political framework. Thus, they came to be labeled as independent (meaning, independent from the Chinese empire). Those known as Flowery Lisu appear to have originated in the Southern part of Lisu distribution in Yunnan, around Tengchong and eventually migrated further south into the Shan States of Burma and later into Thailand. While deeply involved in the markers of Chinese ethnicity and in Chinese dominated trade, they were politically independent. Thus, from north to south, there was a gradient of involvement in and assimilation to Tibetan to Chinese

political style, and a bell curve of degrees of independence, with more “independent” populations in the North and the South, reflecting political conditions in those regions.

Yunnan as a Place: Fragmented Landscapes and Politics

Yunnan was a crossroads of west and east, of Southeast Asia and China. The northwestern region of Yunnan and eastern region of northern Burma was a meeting ground of diverse peoples and a site of great political and cultural complexity. Out of these conditions in this particular time and place arose the dynamic of Lisu social structure and migration southward; understanding this is essential to understanding the prior text of Lisu in Thailand.

Physical Features

The geography of Yunnan is a significant factor in understanding the social relations of the people of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. The physical conditions often isolated populations of the region from direct control of neighboring empires, resulting in fragmented local polities. The people of western Yunnan were exposed to all sorts of calamities, especially flood and fire: flash floods left deposits of sand and shingle that covered entire villages and fires that incinerated every house, sudden landslides on mountain slopes, and severe earthquakes (Baber 1882:52). Environmental conditions made subsistence unstable.

Geographically, Yunnan is a place of high mountains inter-cut with rushing rivers in deep gorges and canyons, narrow valleys, and plains basins. The western gorges are formed by four great rivers: the Nu (Salween); the Lancang (Mekong); and in Burma, the Nmai Hka and Mali Hka, tributaries of the Irrawaddy. All of these are restricted by the longitudinal ranges and cut southward in unusually deep gorges. Yunnan on the border with Burma is a region of “formidable” topography and “epic” longitudinally running mountain ranges (Wiens 1967:20-21). The weather tended to be dry, particularly on the western slopes, which were barren due to the prevailing winds (Baber 1882:166-7; Wiens 1967:26), but prone to periodic heavy rains and flooding. It is also a seismically volatile region. More recently, a series of earthquakes struck 19 different locations in

Yunnan over a period of fifteen hours early December 26th, 2004, ranging up to 5 on the Richter scale. Another earthquake four months previously left 126,000 people homeless (Xinhua News Agency 2004d).¹⁰ These geographical and topological features, which made travel so difficult, also united Yunnan with the northern part of mainland Southeast Asia as a geographic and ecological region known as Montane Mainland Southeast Asia or the Upper Mekhong Ecoregion (Van Keer *et al.* 1998:1). This geography supported a cultural continuity in that as a discrete geographical bloc of climatological unreliability, rugged terrain, high altitude, and poor soils, it was resistant to Han incursion (Wiens 1967:8, 20-21).

Western Yunnan as a Place

Geographic conditions favored a patchwork of small autonomous polities, of which few had the economic and population resources to rise as an empire in their own right (Lee 1979:48). Geography granted a degree of autonomy from the hegemony of Chinese imperial power; location placed the smaller cultural groups in position to play off state powers against each other locally; trade patterns tied the potentially isolated social groups of western Yunnan into a common cultural substratum and provided the wealth by which they were able to survive severe physiogeographical conditions.

Study of overland trade routes between China and its south/southwest neighbors illustrates the continuity of a region that has been called Northern Mainland Southeast Asia (Sun 1994; Sun 2000; Edwards 2002; see also Giersch 2001). Given the severity of ecological conditions, the growth of trade networks was an essential component of local adaptations and

¹⁰ The area of Tibet, Assam, and Burma is part of the Great Boundary Fault where the eastern edge of the Himalayas is still growing and very unstable. One of the worst earthquakes in historical times up until the Sumatra earthquake of December 2004 occurred in this region. It lasted only four minutes but more than one million square miles of land were affected. Mountains fell apart, rivers were dammed, and the hydrology of the region was permanently changed. Survivors suffered from the effects of this earthquake for years afterwards (Rabinowitz 2001:125-26). For other recent earthquakes, see BBC World Service 2001; CNN.Com 2001; and Hewitt 2001. For recent floods and the role of a strong centralized state in ameliorating population movement, see Agence France Presse English 2004; Xinhua News Agency 2004a; Xinhua News Agency 2004b; and Xinhua News Agency 2004c.

most people participated in trade, even if indirectly (Samuel 1993:145, 566). Even after the desolation of the region after the Muslim Rebellions and the increased penetration of western colonial trade in the nineteenth century distorted regional trade networks, trade relations among China, Yunnan, Tibet, and the plethora of smaller kingdoms throughout western Yunnan, northern Burma, and northern Thailand continued. Especially after the Muslim Rebellions, Chinese villages in what is now northeastern Burma were tied into a common Northern or Montane Mainland Southeast Asian trade nexus (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I and II; Hill 1998).

Culturally, Yunnan was not so much peripheral to China as it was central to “a web of linguistically-related villages spanning parts of Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and India” (Davis 2001:48). Geography, religion, politics and trade oriented this region toward Tibet to the northwest and Burma and Thailand to the southwest (Giersch 2001:73; Gros 1996; Sun 2001) at times far more than toward the Chinese empire. Until recently, our understanding of the region has been colored by views that saw lands under native chief (*tusi*) invested or validated by the Chinese court as actual territories of the Chinese empire and ignored the substantial trade and cultural exchange that occurred between Southeast Asians and Chinese via traders of many cultural groups (Sun 2000:5, 15). The concept of national boundaries still prevent the kind of interdisciplinary communication necessary to understand the history, society, and economy of these regions in their own terms rather than in presentist nationalist ones.¹¹ As Frank’s (1998) work “reorient”ed our perspective on world trade systems from center to periphery by demonstrating the historically central nature of the periphery, more recent work by historians and cultural anthropologists in southwestern Yunnan have illustrated commonalities with Northern Montane Southeast Asian patterns of social relations: upland/lowland ritual relations, debt and

¹¹ For instance, at a panel at the 2001 AAS about ethnic groups in Yunnan – many of whom also live in Burma, Thailand, and Laos – one of the presenters gave her talk in Chinese. This in itself was understandable and acceptable. But no one on the panel translated the talk; questions to her were presented in Chinese and her answers were also not translated.

dependency as organizing principles, methods and meanings of display of wealth and status (see Gros 1996 and Jonsson 1996 to see contrasting discussions of such commonalities).

Place and Shifting Populations

While the core area of Lisu settlement in the Upper Salween is often referred to as the Lisu homeland, migration and shifting populations seem to have been the norm rather than the exception. Movements of people, both forced and voluntary, had occurred for centuries (Sun 2001). The people of western Yunnan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lived in a place of tumult and populations shifted in response to it. Ancestral Lisu populations may have moved to the Salween River Valley as a result of warfare, including warfare among the Tibetans, Tang, Nanzhao, and Cuan in the eighth and ninth centuries, in which Lisu provided soldiers for Nanzhao; in the seventeenth century in the far north in Bingzhongluo when Lisu fled from the Upper Mekong to the Nu; and in the eighteenth and nineteenth century when warfare between the Naxi and Tibetans resulted in relocations of Lisu, including migration of Lisu down the Jinsha (Yangtze) River into north central Yunnan (Bradley 2004; Bradley, p.c., February 2005; CHINAdaily 2002; Gros 2001).

Natural disasters such as earthquakes likely prompted migration. Migration is also indicated by linguistic evidence. Lisu is a Tibeto-Burman language of the Central Ngwi subgroup. The core original population may have been located in northwestern central Yunnan and now lives primarily in the western part of their range. It is closely related to Yi (Lolo). The use of the autonym “Ni” (also expressed as “Li”) is used by most of the groups in the Ngwi subgroups (Matisoff 1986:72; Bradley 1997:161, 169; Bradley 2004).

If Lisu responded then as they have in the past 175 years, one response to the endemic natural disasters, the dangers of war, not to mention the burdens of economic and political dependency, was to move away. While there are no early references to migration on as great a scale as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gros states that Lisu settled in the

upper Salween as a result of fighting between Tibetans and Chinese in the 1760s (Gros 2001b).

In short, Lisu people were not isolated and separate, but actors within a cultural continuum of Tibetan economic and cultural influence and the extension of Chinese administration as well as, in time, the colonial regimes in Burma.

Shifting Borders and Multiple Spheres of Authority

Northwestern Yunnan was a site of political and cultural complexity in part because Tibetan and Chinese influence coexisted in uneasy equilibrium while both attempted to extend their dominance (Gros 1996; Lee 1979:35-36; Wiens 1967:8). It was a place of battles, rebellions, banditry, and social unrest, creating an insecure social and political climate. Much research has looked at Western Yunnan as an external frontier, an “internal frontier” (Lee 1979:59) or “soft border” of interaction (Mote 1999:706), in which Chinese and indigenous cultures and forms of rulership intertwined in a kind of cultural duality. But Northwest Yunnan was a theater of unceasing contestation with its own dynamics (Gros 1996; Gros 2001). To look at Yunnan simply as a Sino-Tibetan frontier contributes little to understanding the internal dynamics of the place. These helped to form the dynamics of adaptive strategies of Lisu in Thailand as people who had not been isolated tribal peoples either economically or politically.

Tibetan influence in northwestern Yunnan was strong and not substantially challenged until the Qing Dynasty in the eighteenth century extended administration and delineated areas of influence, particularly control over people and resources (Giersch 2001:71; Gros 1996; Lee 1979:35, 56-57; Mote 1999:936-7; Wiens 1967:8). A period of peace and Chinese economic expansion ensued, along with a huge influx of Han immigrants into Yunnan, during which industry and most arable land were alienated away from local indigenous people (Daniels 1994; Frank 1998; Giersch 2001:67, 75, 83-84; Kang Yunhai 1993; Lee 1979:44, 49, 51; Lee 1982a; Lee 1982b; Mote 1999:705, 715, 903, 941-3, 953; Spence 1990:94-5; Wiens 1967:198-9, 246, 253). However by the mid-nineteenth century a series of Chinese civil conflicts, particularly the Muslim

Rebellions, arose in which competition between immigrant Chinese and local populations played a part. The cost was devastating. Millions were killed and Yunnan's economy was left on the verge of ruin; the population suffered poverty and epidemic disease; much of the overland trade was destroyed; banditry was endemic; many of the Hui (Muslim Chinese) traders fled south to Burma and Thailand. Given weakened central Chinese administration, competing interests (local polities, Tibet, aggressive Western colonial states) attempted to establish political and economic control (Anderson 1871:136; Baber 1882:53-59; Feuerwerker 1975; Hill 1998:15; Lee 1979:59-61; Lee 1982a; Lee 1982b:284, 302; Samuel 1993:69, 77, 542; Spence 1990:114; Turrell 1988:148; Wang 1966:15; Wang Jiangping 1996:211-212, 235-237, 242-243, 246, 249, 250-1, 254-260; 257-258).

The Qing attempted to tighten control over "parts of Tibet in China" (northwest Yunnan and Sichuan) in 1905-1911, but extension of Chinese administration merely exacerbated unrest and resulted in uprisings (Davies 1909:387; Lee 1979:35; Samuel 1993:70-1; Teichman 1922:195, 198; Wiens 1967:237). Even where militarily successful, the Chinese were unable to establish either borders or hegemony and government proved to be only a facade on a fundamentally Tibetan structures of power. Populations remained firmly culturally and politically Tibetan. Northwestern Yunnan was significant in the religious dynamics of Central Tibet, and many populations were politically oriented toward Tibetan-style kings or directly subject to Buddhist monasteries (Davies 1909:386; Gros 1996; Lee 1979:55, 60; Mote 1999:847; Samuel 1993:69, 320-322, 533-537; Teichman 1922:2). Western observers described a pattern in which Chinese subjugated Tibetan and other local populations; local garrison joined with natives in a revolt; lamas and local people expelled the Chinese; the Chinese re-subjugated them; and the cycle started again (Teichman 1922:197). When the Qing Dynasty fell in 1911, there was a general uprising against the Chinese. In the words of the British consular official who had negotiated a border agreement between Tibet and China in 1918, "the whole edifice of Chinese control was ... but a hastily constructed framework, imposed on an unwilling people taken by surprise, and the greater part of it collapsed completely when put to the test at the time of the

[Republican] revolution ..." (Teichman 1922:33). This autonomy and – from the point of view of empires, instability – continued well into the twentieth century.

Competing Models of Rule in Western Yunnan

Despite expanding Chinese administration, most of the people of northwestern Yunnan were imbricated in Tibetan culture. In every place in northwestern Yunnan, Lisu were minority populations surrounded by Tibetans, Naxi, Pumi, Nu, Yi, and Bai – all involved in Tibetan structures of power and Tibetanized to varying degrees. Tibet's power was not in the form of a centralized theocratized state ruling from Lhasa. Rather, it was based on a common social and cultural framework reinforced by trade, religion, ritual, and political alliances. Tibetan models of ritual and power were pervasive throughout the region (Samuel 1993, 39, 41, 69, 85, 543). This was in contrast to the Chinese empire's process of assimilation of territory and bringing people under administrative control. The contrast between a common Tibetan conceptual substratum and Chinese administrative control was marked (Lee 1979:46, 48-49). For most of their history, most Lisu would have been more involved in Tibetan than Chinese models of rule, but for the historical period relevant for understanding Lisu forms through migration, the Chinese empire had begun to extend into western Yunnan.

Chinese models of rule.

The main mechanism of Chinese control was a form of indirect rule through indigenous leaders appointed as *tusi* by the Chinese government. It was a means by which sources of disorder and danger could be either held off or coopted by integration into Chinese military administration and was to be a transitional stage that was to ultimately lead to incorporation into the Chinese civilization. *Tusi* served as proxies to rule, suppress, or hold off other powers in the region. Their main purpose in the Chinese system was to suppress violence and facilitate trade. They were validated by regalia and certification of office. As such, *tusi* were to model appropriate

Chinese governance and increase Chinese “political legitimacy and cultural prestige” (Herman 1997:48). Over time, the nature of *tusi* varied as to degree of Sinicization (through literacy and examinations) and control by counterpart Chinese administrators. *Tusi*, however, were often too locally powerful and too spatially distant from the central government to be controlled. One of the consequences of this indirect rule was that local people had little direct contact with the Chinese except at times of war or in the area around garrisons/trading entrepôts, which were little more than towns with inns for traders and some soldiers for protection. The tribal peoples living in the interstices of Chinese occupation of the valley bottoms and plains were not loyal to the Chinese administration; the constricted and isolated Chinese settlements were fair prey to ‘tribal’ raiders whenever the authority of the imperial government showed signs of weakness. With economic expansion and the influx of Chinese settlers into Yunnan, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Qing replaced *tusi* with imperial officers, while in northwest Yunnan they established *tusi* for the first time (Baber 1882:59-60; Chao 1995:45; Feuerwerker 1975; Giersch 2001:67-68; Gros 1996; Gros 2001b; Herman 1997; Kingdon-Ward 1986; Lee 1979:47-57; Lee 1982a:728-730; Lee 1982b; Mote 1999:703-711, 715-717, 902-903, 936-937; Rock 1947:296, 310n, 320; Samuel 1993:70-71; Sun 2001; Turrell 1988:145, 147, 161; Walker 1991:9; Wiens 1967:232-233, 240, 244-246, 249-250).

Tusi were middlemen or brokers (*cf.* Wolf 1956). The position itself was one of cultural duality. They were point men for Chinese administration and cultural assimilation and yet simultaneously local actors strategizing within the context of intertwined indigenous and Tibetan cultures. They negotiated between the demands of the Chinese empire and more immediate powers. Chinese validation could strengthen local rulers, but they did not for that reason strictly adhere to Chinese interests as to act against local interests could undercut their power. Rather, they strategically drew on multiple repertoires of identity and roles (Sturgeon 2004). In one instance, a *tusi* on the Yunnan/northern Burma border refused to punish Kachin bandits of a Chinese opium caravan because the Kachin were their neighbors and their interests lay with them

(Davies 1909:38-39). In fact, it appears that the Chinese were often rather more dependent on *tusi* than otherwise. Throughout the early twentieth century, when *tusi* in western Yunnan were eliminated, banditry and uprisings increased, and even when *tusi* were eliminated the *tusi* families maintained great local power through their armies and as landlords (Herman 1997; Rock 1947:417; Samuel 1993:70-71; Teichman 1922:197-198).

Tibetan cultural frameworks.

Central Tibet was not a state or empire in the Chinese sense. Tibetan expansion occurred through Tibetanization, the spread of a common cultural framework through trade and religious influence, and did not always entail total cultural absorption. The process was an essential part of Tibetan cultural incorporation of fringe populations and was based on a religious missionary view of the 'wild' people on the fringes of Central Tibet. It was facilitated by trade networks and reinforced by political alliances. As a consequence, there were a wide variety of people identified as 'Tibetan' who exhibited a range of dialects, languages, forms of dress, and religious expression. Lisu were specifically mentioned in Tibetan historical texts as a group to be counteracted and converted (Davies 1909:387; Kingdon-Ward 1986; Samuel 1993:81, 84-85, 147-149 533-537). Lisu social organization shows many commonalities with greater Tibetan social structure, both through contact directly with Tibetans and indirectly through "Tibetanized peoples." As importantly, Lisu is a Tibeto-Burman language, thus sharing that linguistic metaphorical substratum (Matisoff 1991:484-485). Certainly the Lisu were a part of the ritual and political language of power found throughout this region; it is possible that Lisu shamanic practices were related to pre-Buddhist Tibetan practices. Other regional similarities in ritual have been noted by Chao, suggesting that a single group's distinctive religious tradition may actually be a form of religious practice common to an entire region (Chao 1995).

Samuel states that religious incorporation was the initial stage in Tibetanization and that cultural absorption did not always follow (Samuel 1993:147). However, highland peoples such as

the Lisu were exposed to Buddhism but adopted it to a limited degree as part of a largely non-Buddhist religious system, if at all (Samuel 1993:554), and I have found no references whatsoever to Buddhist Lisu populations. It may be that, as in lower Southeast Asia, conversion to a state religion also entailed change of ethnic identity. It may have been that local leaders took on the role of chiefs and practiced, at least nominally, Tibetan forms of worship, a strategy that would have been an attempt to assert the kind of dominance that superior access to religious power brought.¹² However, the shamanic elements of Tibetan Buddhism would generally have been more congruent with the Lisu social and political structures than the clerical, textual traditions. Shamanic Buddhism comes out of and is congruent with de-centralized state-less societies. If the essence of shamanism is the manipulation and harmonizing of people's souls, power, and a myriad of local spirits, deities and ancestors (as Samuel holds), then Shamanic Buddhism could have been adopted in these societies because it was believed to provide a superior set of techniques for exercising those powers (Samuel 1993:562-64). This religious complex was associated with a rich and powerful set of states with access to trade, the ability to suppress other groups with its armies, and demonstrable ritual power. A chief manipulating these forces with these techniques allied himself, then, with even more powerful forces than local ones. Buddhist lamas and monasteries could have become important in a chief's alliances to maintain and extend power – through contacts in the real and spiritual worlds – and through providing a common language of ritual and power with neighboring subjects and allies (*cf.* Gros 1996 and Leach 1964). Finally, we can not forget the agency of highland peoples, consciously choosing to at least superficially adopt Buddhism and thereby demonstrate their 'civilized' or 'tamed' status in order to gain benefits, access to trade, validation of political position, a more extensive network of allies, and protection against violence in a strife-torn and unstable region. Tibetan Buddhism was well-suited to such needs, due to its many diverse modes of religious thought and practice (Samuel

¹² Similar processes took place among other Northern Montane Southeast Asian peoples such as the Lahu (Walker 1995; Boonkamyeung 2001; Walker 2003).

1993:560-61). Nevertheless, the power of Tibet was often founded on specific material dominance; Gros documents cases in which a Tibetan monastery took territory for a monastery, removed all of the local people, and replaced them with Tibetan servants to the monastery. Lhasa and other Tibetan states also enforced a kind of corvee, the *ula*, in which local people were compelled to work as porters for Tibetan rulers (kings, princes, and lamas), often in harsh conditions (Teichman 1922:223-224).

Ritual and control of mystical forces were important in the display and establishment of power. When the Chinese established Weixi Prefecture in northwestern Yunnan in 1729, the *tusi* they appointed built Buddhist temples throughout their sphere of influence, expressing Tibetan Buddhist concepts of power. In the late nineteenth century, a sectarian conflict between Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and their patrons gave rise to a battle in which bands of Lisu burned down villages under protection of an opposing temple and took slaves who were later redeemed by the French Catholic Mission. The French demonstrated power within local frameworks by this action. Displays of wealth through patronage of dependents and feasting, ritual acts of authority over the land through local shamans and territorial spirits, prowess at battle, and healing all demonstrated the right to rule within a conceptual substratum linking ritual and power that was common throughout the region (Gros 1996; Gros 2001).

An example of this was the annual new year feast held by the ruler of Yezhi that his more peripheral subjects, in this case Lisu and Nu, were obliged to attend. Every three years, the ruler feasted them for three days; he distributed a piece of beef and some pennies and they brought him two pounds of mushrooms (an item gathered in forested areas) (Gros 1996, quoting Desgodins 1872). This is similar to a ritual described for Lao kings of Luang Prabang and upland peoples by which the upland peoples' presentations to the king exemplified the king's assumption of the supernatural power of the indigenes over the land (Archaimbault 1973). Such rituals confirmed chiefs' and kings' prestige, status, and political power throughout Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. The leader's prestige was enhanced as he displayed his generosity, both

materially and ritually, and this underlay political centralization as a sacrifice could only be performed on behalf of the people for their well being by a chief who served as intermediary with the local spirits (Gros 1996).¹³

In short, while Tibetan influence was not homogenous, it was part of common, cohesive structure of northwest Yunnan. The Lisu people would have, for much of their history, been in far closer contact with Tibetan peoples than with Chinese. This is not to negate the role of Chinese political institutions in the constitution of local societies, however. At the very least, the Chinese empire had strong interests in Yunnan because of trade with and through Yunnan to polities further south and west such as Tibet and Burma. Chinese power served as a counterpoint to Tibetan power and a curb upon local warfare.

Multiple Spheres of Influence

For the people of Yunnan at this time including Lisu, shifting alliances were the norm. Yunnan and the actions of the people living there can not be understood in simple “border” terms. The political system of northwestern Yunnan was a complex one in which Chinese and Tibetan power were encased locally (Gros 1996; Lee 1979:41, 46; Samuel 1993:41, 69, 85, 543). Furthermore, we can look at the kind of relationship that existed between the rulers of chiefdoms or small states and peripheral peoples. State efforts to control the people, resources, and territories of the peripheries contributed to the rise of small border chiefs, locally influential men who controlled local resource access and positioned themselves as border guardians for the state (Sturgeon 2004). Both Tibet and China were powerful empires with specific economic and

¹³ Lisu in northern Thailand notably refused such centralized ritual practice as they did political control. Ritual occurred in the household first and foremost and generational hierarchy was observable there. There were village-level communal rituals. No group had privileged access to spiritual powers; they were not hierarchical, except in that the servitor of the “Old Grandfather” shrine organized ritual and prestations. Under Thai state coercion to form politically cohesive villages, rituals honoring the “Old Grandfather” spirit of the village have become increasingly important, although even here most of the ritual was carried out within or by individual households.

political interests in western Yunnan. Their ability to control the people of these regions depended on historical conditions such as their own internal strengths and dynamics as well as relative power of rivals. Both models of rule provided important forms of validation and legitimation for local rulers. Adherence to the social mores of those empires were “markers of social standing that cemented the authority of local ... rulers over their subordinate subjects” and implied a specific relationship of entitlement (Chao 1990:36-7). Tibeto-Burman peoples were “sandwiched” between the expanding Tibetan and Chinese states, each competing for dominance over the people in-between; furthermore, in the southern reaches of this region, Tai and Burmese states exerted their own influence on the people of this region. Tibeto-Burman peoples here, therefore, lived in at least a “double periphery” (McKhann 1999:201). Here, I discuss the general patterns; the specifics of Lisu political economic forms in this context is discussed in the next section, “Different Kinds of Lisu.”

Wars between these two powers – or through proxy local chiefs – rarely resulted in clear and permanent demarcation of boundaries. Few demarcated political boundaries existed until the 1890s and what borders there were overlapped (Giersch 2001:71; Mote 1999:706, 709; *cf.* Winichakul 1994). Boundaries shifted and intertwined and overlapped and in practice multiple, non-border-bounded allegiances remained the pattern for rulers and their dependents in western Yunnan. Local rulers were under the (often nominal) suzerainty of different powers. Loyalties and tributary relationships also shifted over time, and local rulers were not necessarily loyal to just one court. They sometimes declared loyalty to more than one power at the same time in order to advance their own interests and reconciled each power as necessary.

Conflicts among masters put local populations in onerous conditions, obligated to Chinese officials, Naxi *tusi*, indigenous leaders, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and rulers from Central Tibet (Baber 1882:126; Samuel 1993:69, 72; Teichman 1922:8; *cf.* Mote 1999:178, Samuel quoting Migot and Guibaut). In one case, a group of Nu in Weixi Prefecture paid annual tribute to China, via the lama; tribute to a Tibetan official nearby, called alms; free transportation of

salt loads for both entities and a rich merchant; and were then forced to buy that salt at an inflated price (Gros 1996; Gros 2001). Such obligations increasingly led to indebtedness, debt slavery, and the alienation of land; observers almost universally commented on the ubiquity of slavery (best understood as a form of dependency) in the region in the nineteenth century (Anderson 1871; Baber 1882; Gros 1996; Giersch 2001). As a result, people moved. Similarly, social and political conflict and the power of centralized empires became in themselves reasons to avoid government obligations by migrating out of that realm of control.

One survival strategy was to seek the protection of whichever polity appeared more fair or less demanding. Leaders and communities played these powers against each other. In this context, the tribal peoples tended to choose the governance of whomsoever they found to their advantage. Chinese rule sometimes presented an attractive alternative to Tibetan rule. In 1720 when a Chinese garrison conquered the salt marshes of Yangjin, south of Tibetan Tsarong, local Nu paid tribute of animal skins, medicinal plants, and hemp cloth to the Chinese to ensure their protection against Tibetans and Lisu, and to receive land tenure rights (Gros 1996). The rise of colonial powers in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia – the French Mission in Kham, the British in Burma – gave local powers and people another patron to cultivate. In one case (the Pianma Frontier Incident), two headmen in a *tusi* domain who were both Han but had been brought up in Kachin society complained of the *tusi* to Chinese authorities. When their case failed, they petitioned the British authorities to recognize Pianma as being under British jurisdiction. The British accepted and sent troops to protect the village. In winter of 1910, 2000 British troops occupied the territory and stationed garrisons in all the important villages (Wiens 1967:256). Such strategies were possible in the context of the multiple spheres of authority in the region, and indigenes' strategies continued within that framework even in the face of European colonialism and expanding Chinese hegemony.

In the interstices of political control, local populations were at times able to negotiate a degree of autonomy. Independent groups, such as many of the Lisu in the Upper Salween Valley,

may have avoided the worst of debt, dependency, and alienation of land, but they were no less involved in these state relations as tributaries, representatives, or mercenaries for indigenous chiefs, Tibetan rulers, and Chinese military. In Weixi, the Naxi *tusi* delegated part of their authority to other, smaller chiefs to represent them in regions distant from their fiefs. Influential Lisu were among them (Gros 1996; Gros 2001; Rock 1947; Gros, personal communication June 08 2001). Leaders allied themselves with greater powers to consolidate their positions; local people switched ethnic identity depending on political and cultural power. This is a pattern of upland/lowland relations also found in mainland Southeast Asia up until World War II (Jonsson 1996a).

But in the nineteenth century, Chinese administration was extended to more of Yunnan, population pressure resulted from Chinese immigration, and trade patterns changed with the appearance of Western mercantilism. As a result, many Lisu and other uplanders came under the direct influence of Chinese administration. This was far more true in the southwest of Yunnan than in the northwest, and Lisu political organization reflects this as they adapted to these conditions.

Different Kinds of Lisu

Variety in the range of economic strategies of Lisu populations demonstrate the flexibility in modes of production in the context of opportunities and adaptation to local political, economic, and ecological conditions. These were by no means isolated peoples.

Economies

Production

Little of substance was documented of Lisu subsistence in the nineteenth century. State views of the Lisu typically denigrated their production systems as uncivilized and primitive. The following is typical of state views of swiddening people:

The people are also exceedingly lazy; in the spring they do a few days' work in scraping a patch of soil, just large enough to yield subsistence, and in planting their maize; then in early October they put in a few days' more work, getting in their crop and cutting their hemp, or looking after their tobacco patch. All the rest of their lives is spent in eating, sleeping, and squatting round the hearth, varied by a rare expedition to get wood for a crossbow, poison for their arrows, or a stock of salt or wild honey. Under these conditions it is not surprising that, in spite of the sparseness of the population and the great extent of land suitable for maize and other cultivation, famine is of frequent occurrence (Forrest 1908:262).

Chinese chronicles similarly mentioned Lisu as a "primitive" tribal people living high in the mountains and subsisting by hunting, gathering, and "crude" subsistence agriculture (Lee 1979:48). One hundred years later, the official Chinese position was that Lisu were too poor to have participated in trade and it was not until Bai and Han, with their superior agricultural methods and higher productivity, that some primitive markets began to appear. "They had to make up for their scanty agricultural output by collecting fruits and wild vegetables and hunting" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000). This is, of course, in keeping with both the Marx/Engels understanding of social evolution and the civilizing project of the expanding state. Usefully, it also ignores Tibetan trade and influence. Similar discourses also occurred in Southeast Asian states.

Lisu tended to live in small villages in the high mountains, usually near the sources of streams (Davies 1909:392; Forrest 1908:244, 248, 254, 262; Fraser 1922:iii; Kingdon-Ward 1986:196, 203; Rose and Brown 1911:251). Housing styles varied from the Nujiang style in non-Sinicized villages of houses made of logs and raised on piles, with a stone hearth in the center and a verandah, to the Chinese style further south, on a floor of beaten earth and with a porch supported on stone plinths (Fraser 1922:v-vi; Forrest 1908:248, 262; Rose and Brown 1911:260). Both styles were found among the Lisu of northern Thailand in the late twentieth century.

Lisu primarily practiced swidden agriculture. Western explorers commented on how heavily cleared many of their slopes were and on the extensive grasslands, which they blamed on swiddening but may have been due to cattle herding and local climatological conditions of great dryness (*cf.* Sherman 1980). West in Burma, with much greater rainfall, monsoon forest swiddening was the norm (Anderson 1871:364; Davies 1909:36; Leach 1965:22-23; Rock

1947:335, 349), as it was later in northern Thailand. Swiddening was not the only cultivation technique in the Lisu repertoire, however. In those places where they lived low enough on slopes and terrain and hydrology permitted, Lisu constructed terraces for wet rice cultivation, specifically in area just north of 26° 30' on the Salween in Yunnan and below 26° 15' in Burma (Forrest 1908:253; Harris and Ma 1997:171; Leach 1965:22-23). Some villages also had fenced house gardens (Forrest 1908:254; Kingdon-Ward 1986:195-199, 214). The crops grown also varied with latitude and location on slopes. Rice was not a staple crop, particularly in the north; even where rice was more common in the southern reaches of Lisu distribution, it could not support the local population as they lived at altitudes too cold for rice. There were a variety of other grain crops, including different kinds of millet, buckwheat, barley, wheat, sorghum, Job's tears, and corn after the sixteenth century (Anderson 1871:83; Bradley 1997:162-163; Davies 1909:36, 386; Forrest 1908:244, 250, 253, 262; Harris and Ma 1997:171; Kingdon-Ward 1986:195-199, 205; Rose and Brown 1911:256, 265). Supplementary crops included pumpkins, beans, taro, Chinese peaches, quinces, oranges and tobacco (Kingdon-Ward 1986:186, 205, 214; Rose and Brown 1911:265). Further southwest in the Kachin Hills, supplementary crops included potatoes, sesame, hemp, indigo, and opium (Anderson 1871:83), a selection similar to that of Lisu in northern Thailand decades later. Despite assumptions that Lisu were strictly poor, lazy subsistence farmers, these crops indicate that there was some production for the market because they were frequently sold in local markets. Potatoes, for instance, were planted for sale to a British Garrison in Upper Burma (George 1915:44-45).

Little specific information is available on land tenure in the Upper Salween because of changing demographic and land ownership conditions in which indigenous land ownership systems were not treated as valid by the Chinese or British colonial states (Giersch 2001). For instance, Han were encouraged in their acquisition of land by Chinese officials (Rose and Brown 1911:264). Also, the land tenure system was considerably different from the Chinese system of land ownership; where there were *tusi* or native chiefs, land ownership was vested in the hands of

native rulers (Lee 1979:49). Lisu land tenure was based on use; land was “owned” by local spirits, although reportedly each family also had the right to preserve and maintain a tract of mountain land for their use only (Dessaint and Dessaint 1992; Fraser 1922:vi; Gros 1996; Rose and Brown 1911:264). In stark contrast to the pattern in northern Thailand in the twentieth century, it appears that their form of swiddening was rotational rather than pioneer, so that land was planted for up to two years then fallowed for up to thirty years before being used again. However, with increased population, the fallow shortened to as little as three years; with the land being worked out more quickly, the Lisu then migrated to less densely populated forested areas (Fraser 1922:vi; Harris and Ma 1997:171). Land use in northern Thailand will be discussed in a later chapter, but the ideal rotational pattern was not followed in the twentieth century there, either. Household property, owned by the father, was said to be inherited equally by the sons (Rose and Brown 1911:265), although there is not enough detail to support this and I believe this to be a misstatement of trans-generational transfers. Both land tenure and inheritance can be related to the encompassing political economy in which they existed, and so these practices changed depending on the amount of land available, the degree to which states or citizens of states claimed control of land, and, of course, migration would also have affected land use and distribution. This will be a topic in Chapter 4.

Lisu were characterized as avid hunters; even in modern northern Thailand, where little game is left, young men rarely travel without nets, traps, snares, and guns with which to hunt. In Yunnan, game included the large and small, gentle and dangerous – panther, porcupine, pheasant, bear, barking deer – to protect crops, to provide meat, and for adventure, often taking week long trips to hunt big game. Yet it was always secondary to agriculture. Hunting and foraging were primarily for subsistence – Lisu in fact refused to sell meat to travelers – but by the mid-twentieth century Lisu were hunting heavily for Chinese markets (Anderson 1871:363; Daniels 1994; Fraser 1922:vi; Harris and Ma 1997:171; Rabinowitz 2001; Rose and Brown 1911:251-252; Stevenson 1981:39). Lisu also foraged in the forest for items such as mushrooms. Wild honey

was a very significant food item (Daniels 1994; Forrest 1908:248, 262; Rose and Brown 1911:256, 265). Some foraged items were sold. They fished where they lived on rivers or large streams by line or by traps (Kingdon-Ward 1986:194, 220-221). In the north, cattle were a significant domestic animal, especially for regional trade. Herding cattle required access to grazing land in many regions. Frequent feuds erupted over cattle theft. Aside from cattle, Lisu husbanded sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens; they rarely kept mules or ponies for transport (Daniels 1994; Forrest 1908:242; Fraser 1922:vii; Harris and Ma 1997:171; Kingdon-Ward 1986:199, 222, 224; Rock 1947:335).

Reportedly, Lisu were heavy drinkers of liquor fermented from local grains, a judgment made of many upland ethnic minority peoples (Fraser 1922:v; Anderson 1871:355; Dick 1987:36; Forrest 1908:264; Kingdon-Ward 1986:204). Again, this is one of those judgements that perhaps says more of observers' categories. Nevertheless, alcohol was an essential part of many social and ritual events and my experience in Southeast Asia is that getting visitors drunk was safeguard against outsiders finding out too much about them.

Trade

Views of Lisu as an isolated, uncivilized tribe are challenged by historical evidence of Lisu contacts. Lisu were involved in trade, perhaps as an integral part of their adaptation to the unstable ecological conditions in which they lived as well as a historical contingency of their relationship with Tibetan peoples. Living along the trade routes between China and Tibet, incorporated into the spheres of these polities and economies, they participated in at least the edges of this economy based on trade, as robbers, porters, guards of passes, leviers of tolls, and in all cases eager to trade with outsiders. In these roles, Lisu and other uplanders were comfortable with a range of people and languages (*cf.* Samuel 1993:145-6; d'Orleans 1896:306; Hertz 1912:83). They actively sought trade opportunities and carried products to lowland markets

for sale. Even independent Lisu living in small, feuding, egalitarian, autonomous villages, with no knowledge of Chinese – the model of the primitive village – were eager to trade.

In western Yunnan, Lisu most frequently sought silver, salt, cotton, and cloth in their trades. Local trade for salt was brisk and people would even sell grain crops to get it; goiter was prevalent in the northern regions, and trade was the only way to get salt, but cloth was perhaps more desired (Forrest 1908:250, 256, 257; Goullart 1955:71; Kingdon-Ward 1986:23, 183, 185; Rock 1947:399-400). Items for trade included domestic agriculture products such as rice, corn, vegetables, chickens and goats. But forest products seem to have been more trade prevalent for items Lisu used in trade – firewood, large wooden planks, lac, beeswax, and a little gold dust. There was also mention of traders bringing in opium and Lisu selling “some drugs.” Further south and in Burma, where agriculture was more productive and political conditions more settled, regular trade of small quantities was possible. Lisu supplemented their subsistence by selling firewood, timber, vegetables, incense, and hempen cord to Chinese living near their markets (Fraser 1922:vi). Trade between Burma and Yunnan flourished. Caravans of hundreds of mules passed through carrying a wide range of local products such as smoked ham, pigs’ bristles, persimmons, and walnuts in exchange for silk and cotton thread, salt, needles, and inexpensive jewelry. Of far more value was smuggling – opium from Yunnan to Burma and jade from Burma to Yunnan (Anderson 1871:135, 297, 300, 318, 358, 363, 378; Forrest 1908:250, 254; Fraser 1922:vi; Kingdon-Ward 1986:23). Much trade was through narrow and difficult passes that outsiders thought impossible routes, but there is substantial evidence of extensive trade ebbing and flowing along these passes depending on economic and political conditions. The passes provided alternate routes to avoid Chinese frontier stations where they would be expected to pay customs duties; on the other hand, the passes were usually claimed by local populations such as the Lisu, each demanding a toll for their use. Much of this trade was unregulated and therefore by definition smuggling. Trade was risky, due to feuding and the lack of overarching administration to prevent separate taxation at every pass. The risks were ameliorated by networks of allies,

friends, and long-term trading partners on whom one could depend. In one case in Nam Tamai (far north Upper Burma, adjacent to the Upper Salween of Yunnan), a series of transactions between a Chinese trader and a Lisu man consisted of: a goat; a piece of cotton cloth; a jar of liquor; a cow; six viss¹⁴ of *numrin* (the root of *Coptis teeta* used in Chinese medicine); another seven viss of *numrin*; six rupees of cash; and a quill of gold dust. It took a day of arbitration to figure equivalencies (Leach 1965:146). This bespeaks a long-term trading relationship in which there was a great deal of trust, and was embedded in a net of social relationships. Such trading friendships were also a bulwark of Tibetan trading (Forrest 1908:254, 260, 264; Giersch 2001; Samuel 1993:94, 123-125; Stevenson 1981:36).

Notes on Political Organization

What descriptions there are of Lisu social and political structures were made with an eye toward governance and control of trade. Most of the information available concerned issues of interest for trade and political control. From these we can see variations in the degree of political organization from egalitarian forms labeled anarchic, to the presence of and degree of control exercised by headmen or *tusi*. Forrest wrote that the Lisu:

... on the upper Salwin north of Hsia-ku-dé were utter savages. Up to and including Cheng-ka in lat. 26° 12' N., the Lissoo who are nominally controlled by Chinese chiefs are quiet and friendly enough. Then there is the Hsia-ku-dé group of villages under their headman, but not recognizing any Chinese authority, and resisting any attempt of the Chinese chiefs to exercise it. From Yako northwards up to the limits of Lissoo country [Black Lisu], about 27° 35', there is no sort of government or control of any sort of kind, by any Chinese or other chief. Most of the villages have not even a regular headman; nearly every village, too, speaks a [different] dialect ... There are also a number of tribal subdivisions, a source of constant feuds. The Chinese official theory that the country belongs to the hereditary Minchia [Bai] chief Lo, who resides at Tu-wo, lat. 26° 8' N. on the Mekong, has no foundation whatever; in fact, on the contrary, no sort of official person would dare to go anywhere near the country (Forrest 1908:261).

Similarly, Rose and Brown noted that Lisu north of 26° 15' were independent and often without chiefs; towards the Mekong tended to be allied with chiefs; under Lisu *tusi* further south;

¹⁴ A viss is an old eastern Indian and Burmese measure, equally 3.65 pounds.

and under direct Chinese administration around Tengchong (1911:255). Even accounting for Forrest's predisposition to find ungoverned people ripe for British guidance and government, the independence of these Lisu populations from Chinese administration was widely noted.¹⁵

Feuding and slavery were both elements of Lisu society. Both are best understood as part of a legal and economic system of debt, obligation and reciprocity, and an element in the negotiation of compensation and settlement. The accounts of local warfare or feuding available to me sound much like tribal warfare as depicted in "Dead Birds" – but we can never forget the profoundly different context of upland/lowland relations and state penetration in which even "isolated" Lisu lived. Lisu also played a role in the state polities' foreign relations, as soldiers and inhabitants of buffer zones.

Feuding among Lisu villages up to the 1910s was frequent at times and could hinder travel and communications, especially in the region around and north of 26° 30'. Most villages and 'tribal subdivisions' (localized patrilineages or, according to Bradley, p.c., February 2005, patrilineages) appeared to feud; Forrest claimed that feuding killed so many adult males that there were too few men to work and famine resulted; many people had never been more than a day's journey from their own villages; roads were not maintained; and it was almost impossible to get a guide and accurate information about routes. At one point, Forrest's party found themselves in the middle of a Lisu feud over rights to ferry them across the Salween. The people on the west side of the Salween protested when someone on the east side offered to escort them from the west side to the east; the right to escort people from the west to the east was, apparently, that of the Lisu on the west. In defense of their privilege, the west bank Lisu brought out their crossbows and "poisoned arrows" and fired, which Forrest met with a show of British weaponry. Other causes of feuding were the theft of cattle and even maize (Forrest 1908:248, 252-254, 257, 258,

¹⁵ As will be seen later, British and Chinese government sources repeatedly claimed that this feuding (which we can see as fairly regularized relations of dominance) disrupted trade. However, the British in particular were attempting to justify their incursions in the region by claiming to bring peace that would allow trade.

261). Although most offences could be settled by arbitration and mediation, a certain class of offenses involving marriage and sexual transgressions were called by the same term as for feuds and justified violent reprisals. The goal of a feud was not so much to kill people as to make life so unpleasant for enemies that they would agree to pay compensation (Leach 1965:90, 92).

Feuds among villages, as recounted by Forrest, had a ceremonial quality. He described the gathering of a corps of fifty warriors, decorated in silver, deers' horns, pebbles, and cowries and their faces blackened. They carried crossbows five feet long, swords five feet long, and broad ox-hide shields five feet high. While the warriors made an impressive display, the warfare consisted only of display, oratory, and making a show of stringing bows. By afternoon, they had dispersed. Killings were said to take place more by ambush and murder. Forrest took this as evidence of Lisu cowardice, although Black Lisu were feared throughout the Upper Salween for their murderous ways and fighting off all Chinese penetration (if not intrepid British explorers) with their huge cross bows that could shoot arrows a remarkable 125-150 feet (38-48 meters), made more dangerous by the use of tips poisoned with aconite; Chinese garrisons had stories of annual battles with the Lisu, who were said to hide in the jungle and shoot poisoned arrows at them. The Chinese hated and feared the Lisu; in turn the Chinese were hated and despised by local people for their banditry and oppression (Bradley, p.c., February 2005; Forrest 1908:255, 262-264; Kingdon-Ward 1986:222, 224, 228, 240-1, 253; Rose and Brown 1911:255-256, 258).

In general, this level of feuding indicates the weak level of administration at this place and point in history, however, and by no means a constant condition. Perceptions of levels of feuding were heightened by the fact that westerners tended to mount expeditions in the winter months after harvest (from December to May, according to Leach 1965:91), a time given to feuding. Furthermore, Chinese destruction of local polities and their subsequent inability to administer the region following the weakening of administration in the mid-nineteenth century likely led to an

increase in feuding in the face of the lack of extra-village institutions to mediate.¹⁶ In short, while feuding may well have been a feature of Lisu tribal society, the levels of feuding at this time bespeak political conditions rather than an inherently warlike quality of Lisu people. Despite the disruption of trade, travel, and subsistence by feuding, villages often had alliances with Lisu villages not in their immediate neighborhood (Forrest 1908:246, 249, 250, 251). They planted cash crops and traded. This indicates that these people were not as isolated and oppressed by constant feuding as British explorers and Chinese officials claimed. In contrast, the White Lisu under control of Chinese chiefs in the central reaches of distribution, and Flowery or White Lisu in later decades under Pax Britannica in the southern reaches of their distribution, were described in quite different terms as quiet, friendly, docile, peaceful, mild in disposition, and amenable to civilization. By the 1920s, they were said not to engage in warfare or raiding and suffered injustice quietly (Enriquez 1921:70; Forrest 1908:261; Fraser 1922:iv, xi; Stevenson 1981:346).

Warfare entailed slavery. The Independent (Black) Lisu raided many neighboring ethnic groups such as the Nu, the Dulong, and the White Lisu (all relatively Sinicized) for prisoners to be ransomed, and those not ransomed were enslaved. Hostages were also taken in compensation for unpaid debt, although sometimes that debt was concocted by a chief. Conditions were not onerous for slaves. They carried out the same work as their Lisu captors; they could marry; their children were not enslaved; and their status was progressively ameliorated. However, as political conditions changed, slavery disappeared as had feuding; in the southern parts of Lisu distribution and by the early twentieth century, slavery was virtually unknown. Slavery was based on concepts of debt and dependency, principles fundamental to political relations in much of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. It was likely exacerbated and distorted as these debt relationships were used by Chinese in alienating indigenous peoples' land. There were multiple spheres of obligations, tribute, and taxes imposed upon farmers. A creditor made a large part of the

¹⁶ The Ming Dynasty trade with its southern neighbors had included trade of superior Chinese weaponry (Sun 2001). It would be interesting to find out the effects of such trade on levels of warfare and feuding.

population economically and ritually dependent and through these debt relations arose a relation of political dependency and obligation. Later, this system that tied people together politically recombined to create conditions of indebtedness for indigenous peoples and made them susceptible to accepting usurious loans; the labor and production of the local population was alienated, and slavery became sharecropping and landlessness (Dessaint and Ngwawa 1994:61-2; Gros 1996; Gros 2001; Gros 1996, citing Dubernard and Desgodins 1875; Fraser 1922:xi; Giersch 2001:83-84; Leach 1965:299-303; Rose and Brown 1911:265). But as Lisu migrated southwards toward Burma, they became free of these relations of debt and dependency and moved toward autonomy. I believe that the “anarchic” character of Lisu social structure noted in Thailand reflects release from the political and economic conditions that had brought indebtedness and patronage about.

Lisu as Brigands and Mercenaries

Reports of Lisu oscillated between being categorized as brigands to be suppressed or as troops coopted into the imperial project. Banditry and its suppression were a major factor in the economy of the region. In this way, they participated in regional trade, and the relationship of Lisu to states as brigands or soldiers reflects continuing changes in political relations as the relative power of Tibetan and Chinese states ebbed and flowed. The ways in which they were documented was in keeping with the interests of the state for which such documents were written. However, these limited allusions hinted at a significant aspect of how Lisu related to the polities of northwestern Yunnan and thus their political organization and economic adaptations. It was part and parcel of Lisu adaptations to environmental, economic, and political conditions.

In the north, Lisu attacks on Chinese trade caravans and government salt supplies were frequently recorded from 1592 (the late Ming Dynasty) to the early twentieth century. Suppression of bandits was a major responsibility of *tusi*, demonstrating their alliance with the Chinese civilizing project. For instance, the Naxi *tusi* of Lijiang reported his responsibility for suppressing these

robbers, in the early case decapitating 83 of the perpetrators (Baber 1882:59-60, 160; Dick 1987:8; Rock 1947:124, 296, 310n, 321; Rose and Brown 1911:255, 265). Where Lisu lived near high mountain passes that joined valleys, they could in essence control cross-country trade and levy tolls on caravans. This was particularly true in the north, of Black Lisu. For instance, north of Tengchong, where a high range separated the watersheds of the Shweli and Salween Rivers, Lisu preyed on caravans that had to traverse the Mamianguan Pass (Davies 1909:127). In these contexts, Lisu were categorized as dangerous and barbaric, given to violence and attacking legitimate trade. Official documents of the time lumped together all who were “untamed natives,” “bandits,” and “resistors of imperial taxes,” reflecting outrage at the upending of order rather than precise legal categories (Chao 1995:140; Mote 1999:758; Samuel 1993:71; Wing Jiangping 1996:250).

The key factor is who was perceived as an illegitimate attacker. The Black/Independent Lisu in Eastern Tibet and Weixi frequently attacked Nu villages (Rock 1947:330, 334-5; Gros 1996). In the early twentieth century, Kingdon-Ward expressed surprise that the Lisu had not driven the “peaceful” Nu out of the fertile section of the valley between Bangda and Jianadun. He attributed this to the Nu being part-Tibetan and able to withstand incursion of the more “primitive” Lisu (Kingdon-Ward 1986:197), a typically British racist explanation, but it was more likely a matter of the Nu being dependents of Tibetan and Naxi chiefs who protected them. The “timid” Lisu of the Mekong were constantly raided by the independent Lisu of the upper Salween “who [were] dangerous brigands,” taking cattle and hostages who would be made slaves if not ransomed (d’Orleans 1896:301). This must all be understood in the context of political relations of dependence and independence. Uplanders, inaccessible to the administration of the Chinese empire, were able to maintain independence from the rule of law imposed by kingdoms and empires. It was seen as a form of parasitism, in which people of the uplands, poor and living in insecure environments, preyed on those in better conditions. It was also a form of resistance to

state hegemony. They themselves saw it as a form of reverse taxation. As one Yi told a captured French missionary dressed as Chinese:

Do you know who we are? ... We know you Chinese call us thieves and robbers, but it is you who are the robbers. All this country once belonged to our fathers; they had always been its masters and peaceable possessors until the Chinese came and unjustly expelled them. We were the weaker, and had to yield; our country was neither sold nor given away; we come to collect the rent. If you retire to your own territory you will find that we shall not follow you (quoted in (Baber 1882:107).

“Banditry” was also linked to rights over the people of certain areas. Naxi *tusi* of the region delegated a part of their authority to subordinate chiefs who were influential Lisu and in the nineteenth century they levied a tax on the Nu along with the *tusi* of Yezhi (Gros 1996). Where the Lisu predated on Nu, the relationship was not so much of one group driving the other out as of one dominating the other (through militarism, trade, and tribute), and interpretations of the nature of that relationship changed, even for participants. In one case, a Nu community organized a small revolution to lower their numerous and varied taxes to the lamaseries, Tibetan officials, and merchants in the mid-nineteenth century. Chinese and a Lisu regiment of troops assisted them in this (Gros 1996; Gros 2001).¹⁷ This is in keeping with the multiple spheres of authority present in northwestern Yunnan in which shifting alliances were the norm. Incidents of brigandage or revolt increased when central administration was weak, for instance at the time of the Panthay (Muslim) Rebellions after local political relationships had been displaced by the extension of Chinese administration in the early nineteenth century (Anderson 1871:117, 136; Baber 1882:183; Turrell 1988:148).

Conversely, “barbarians” were actors in the process of imperial pacification and expansion. Lisu tell of being conscripted as soldiers by the Chinese and others such as the Tibetans and Naxi (Bradley, p.c., February 2005). Under the control of *tusi* loyal to the Chinese

¹⁷ For instance, when the French Mission to Tibet arrived in Yunnan in 1854, the French were soon seen as rivals for the Tibetans for allegiance, in terms of both wealth and ritual power. The local population, Nung or Nu (closely related to Lisu) were greatly exploited by their multiple allegiances and resultant debt slavery. To them, the missionaries became a way to escape the burdens of multiple masters (Gros 1996, 2001).

empire, co-opted into the imperial endeavor under civilizing leadership, they were considered powerful and effective troops. According to the chronicles of the Naxi *tusi* of Lijiang, they were prevailed upon to aid in suppressing the rebellion of Wu Sangui with the promise of rewards of rice, official seals, and letters patent. These “wild” Lisu and other upland peoples first deceived and led astray then ambushed the rebel forces. The Lijiang campaign was bloody and successful due to the ambushes by the Lisu in the “wild jungle.” Lisu troops were cited again for their contribution to a military undertaking in an 1871 chronicle. Alternations between Lisu as robbers/Lisu as troops continued; in the 1920s, Rock observed or heard of both Lisu robbers at the Lidiping divide west of Lijiang down to Weixi and Lisu guards against Lolo robbers at Yuowabu Pass and Yonging (Rock 1947:139-141, 301, 307n, 393, and plate 231).

Lisu men were also reported to have served as troops for other Tibetanized or partially-Tibetanized groups; Dubernard and Desgodins (875) reported that Lisu were used by “Black Lolo” (Nosu) to fight feuds on their behalf (cited in Hutheesing 1990a:34). When Naxi chiefs invaded the upper Mekong Valley, settled in Weixi, Kangpu, Yezhi, Adunzi, and seized Qizong, Lapu, and Benzilan in the Yangzi Valley, they did so with the aid of Lisu regiments (Gros 1996). Lisu were, in this sense, coopted into Naxi expansion of their realms. Lisu in Burma were hired by Shan nobility as mercenaries (Leach 1965:39-40) and later served in the forces of the British Empire (Enriquez 1921:70).

In this, it is not clear whether these are the same populations oscillating in their relations to lowland powers, or geographically different populations of Lisu moving successively into and out of the orbit of lowland control. It is just as likely that these were the same populations over time, both in the pattern of incorporating rebels into the imperial system, what Feuerwerker calls the transformation from heterodox to orthodox military leadership (1975:43). For instance, at the Yunnan/Burma border at Tengchong, the Lisu headman or *tusi*’s ancestor had been invested as a reward for conquering the Lisu for the Chinese (Davies 1909:36). Incorporation of people into the *tusi* system implied a specific relationship to the Chinese empire. Those tribal groups with *tusi*

were practically imperial subjects and those without were 'bandits' or 'barbarians' and therefore legitimate targets of imperial pacification. Such ethnic markers were actually markers of state control and prestige, indicating one's place as a subject of the Chinese Empire. The scale of 'civilization' corresponded to degrees of state control (Chao 1995:37, 42-3).

Nevertheless, the element of economic adaptation and dependence on trade are significant elements of Lisu strategies. They lived at high altitudes, on mountain tops and, especially on the Upper Salween, conditions did not allow either a significant surplus or reliable subsistence. Mountain peoples could also exploit the fact that they controlled cross-country communications through mountain passes that joined valleys and levy tolls on caravans and gave them a chance to profit from regional trade (Leach 1965:21-22). This appears to have been the case for Lisu on the Upper Salween. As such, they could either be classified as robbers by the state or given legitimacy to collect tolls by being officially appointed by the state. Such political and economic adaptations enabled groups like the Lisu to gain control of greater resources that allowed them to support more stable subsistence as well as status displays. In some conditions, these adaptations also supported chiefs, albeit briefly. Leach summarized some of the ways in which uplanders supported more complex sociopolitical systems. One was to establish a political and economic alliance with more prosperous plains or valley peoples. They could establish themselves as overlords to whom valley peoples paid rent, as occurred with the Kachin and Shan in the HuKawng Valley, Burma, prior to 1926. Another way, according to Leach, was for uplanders to extort lowlanders who would pay uplanders to prevent them raiding their crops (Leach 1965:21-22). The difference between these is perceptions of legitimacy, the difference between tribute and extortion; gifts and raids were two sides of the same coin. An example of this in the Lisu case was raids by Lisu of the Upper Salween on the "peaceful" Nu and White Lisu on the Mekong. These were generally considered illegitimate in the context of a centralizing state and so condemned as raiding, but clearly the Nu at times asked for Lisu help in overthrowing greedy lords – a form of debt consolidation. In smaller numbers, Lisu appear to have taken a

dependent relationship to the locally dominant group. In Burma, Lisu and Kachin were interspersed, Kachin predominating in the west and Lisu in the east. Kachin considered Lisu inferior and in some localities extracted tribute from them (Anderson 1871:118), presumably for allowing them to settle in Kachin territory (Bradley, p.c., February 2005). In light of the multiple spheres of influence and dependency/patronage relationships in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia, exacting tribute would be in keeping with those political relations of dependency. Finally, valley chiefs sometimes engaged uplanders as mercenaries (Leach 1965:22), as occurred with Lisu and Shan or Naxi. In Yezhi and Weixi, Lisu chiefs were incorporated into Naxi polities, delegated the collection of tribute by Naxi chiefs.

In short, Lisu took advantage of political and economic conditions to assert their own place in the multiple spheres of authority and their political forms varied with their degree of incorporation into local polities and the relative power of those polities.

Black, White, Striped: Lisu Ethnic Categorizations and Political Relations

Lisu throughout their distribution were categorized as Black (Hei), White (Pe), and Flowery or Striped (Hua, Hwa). These designations are to this day are commonly said to refer to the color of people's clothing (Dick 1987:80; Bian n.d.; Enriquez 1921:72; Zhao 1999; Zhengyou 2000; USA-China Nujiang River Expedition 1999; and for a picture of men in long white coats see Sinohost 1999). The Black Lisu of the Upper Salween were (mistakenly) assumed to be the core, original group. While these distinctions have been essentialized in ethnographic literature, there were in fact a Chinese categories constructed about ethnic minorities such as the Lisu on the basis of their relations with adjoining states and regional trade.

Looking at the population of Lisu ranging from south to north along the Salween, there is a progression in types of Lisu from Black Lisu in the northern and western regions of Lisu distribution to White Lisu around Tengchong and Chinese administered territories in the north and east, and Flowery Lisu in the South. That is, from north to south along the Salween, Lisu were

increasingly in contact with and influenced by Chinese markets and administration (Rose and Brown 1911:251) and in the southern and eastern parts were more directly under Chinese influence (Enriquez 1921:72). The categories appear to have been based on the extent to which they were Sinicized or Tibetanized (Kingdon-Ward 1986:176). The White and Flowery Lisu were more Sinicized, White being incorporated into the Chinese empire (or at least the *tusi* system) while Flowery relationship with both the Chinese and Tibetan empires was more attenuated. The Black Lisu were neither Sinicized nor consistently incorporated into the Chinese empire. Rather, they lived in polities ruled by Naxi, Tibetans, or themselves, and were relatively free of centralized authority. Culturally, they were partially-Tibetanized (Kingdon-Ward 1986:176; Rose and Brown 1911:255). These differences led to the creation of ethnic sub-classifications rooted in territorial location, political structure and relations, and economic organization.

Categories were based on clothing, language, and political organization. In the region of Zhengjia (about 26° 10') and south, Lisu men dressed in Chinese style clothes; women retained Lisu jewelry and adopted Chinese cotton cloth for clothing in the Lisu style. The women's dress was said to be pretty and colorful. These were generally Flowery ("Striped" or "Patterned") Lisu (Enriquez 1921:72; Forrest 1908:244, 246, 248, 254). Between Zhengjia and Tengchong, Lisu were often under direct Chinese administration. Village headmen were paid a small annual subsidy, in return for which they were responsible for protecting travelers and caravans passing through their territory (Rose and Brown 1911:264). The *tusi* and their families spoke Chinese, and many claimed to be part Chinese. There was little feuding or robbery, but Lisu did have the obligation to pay tax or tribute to the *tusi* who collected this on behalf of the Chinese authorities. A Chinese clerk assisted the *tusi* in collecting taxes, but otherwise the village regulated its own affairs and Chinese officials did not intervene. They also had to cut and clear local roads annually. These were the populations referred to as White Lisu, although some were Flowery Lisu. They themselves referred to this as Chinese territory ("Han-di") and the people referred to themselves as Chinese. The Lisu on the Upper Mekong were peaceful White Lisu under Chinese

control. On the Upper Salween, there were non-Sinicized Lisu populations. Tibetan or Naxi *tusi* held authority, but for significant parts of the region, *tusi* control was nominal. No one spoke Chinese, they wore hempen clothes, villages were small and isolated from each other, there was frequent lineage-based feuding among villages, and many villages did not have a headman. They were often referred to as “wild.” These were the Black Lisu. The distinction between Black and White was highly culturally marked. There was much resentment between the Black and White Lisu, the barbarian and the civilized (Forrest 1908:244, 246, 248, 250, 254, 261; Ch'en 1947:258; Rose and Brown 1911:204).

The distinction between Black and White extended to other Tibeto-Burman peoples such as the Yi and Nosu as well. A Nosu told Baber that he was “Black-bone,” a freeman or noble to the Nosu, but to the Chinese meaning independent. “White-bones” were commoners in his distinction. The Nosu went on to claim “I serve nobody. I receive the Great Emperor’s pay, and keep the peace.” These Nosu also spoke of their wealth and security (Baber 1882:64). This indicates the existence of *tusi*, a great deal of autonomy, and chiefs with a large number of dependents and/or slaves on the model of which Gros writes. Black-bone Nosu, however, were blamed by the Chinese for carrying out banditry. Although declaring his innocence, this Black-bone Nosu chief made payments to the Chinese to prevent punishment by them (Baber 1882:106). Thus, “Black” groups were not so much completely outside of Chinese control as they were on its margins, maintaining autonomy through a degree of accommodation to their role as buffers for the Chinese against foreign polities.

European observers reinterpreted this system of categories in terms of their own racial assumptions about descent and purity. Black Yi, Nosu, Lahu, and Lisu were described as nobility; racially pure, never having intermarried with Chinese; handsome, tall, and strong; assertive, forthright, and energetic; good fighters and independent; and generally admirable if uncooperative with British explorers. White Yi, Nosu, and Lisu were denigrated for intermarrying with Chinese and adopting Chinese customs; wretched, timid, and cowardly; of inferior physique; and shy,

passively retreating into the mountains when the Chinese took their land (Goullart 1955:82, 114-115; Johnston 2001:120; Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)613-614, Scott quoting nineteenth century European explorers). Fraser's missionary work among the White and Flowery Lisu shows them having actively sought allegiance with westerners for education, medical care, and protection against corrupt officials, that is, in the model of shifting spheres of authority, seeking more powerful and less taxing patrons. I suspect that more detailed local history would show an oscillation between White and Black and transformations in the meanings of these categories over time as Chinese and Tibetan hegemony waxed and waned.

Naming and categorization were of great interest to representatives of empire as a means of ruling most effectively through appropriate knowledge and classification, but the terms of those categories varied. In China, the emphasis was on the Confucian project of naming (Shin 1999; Shin 2001). British categories, the European system of most interest vis-à-vis the Lisu, were based on language, territory, and political organization, ultimately as a gauge of evolutionary status (Leach 1965:43-44). The two systems were congruent as attempts to measure levels of civilization. British were far more interested in the relatedness of peoples in order to understand origins and historical migrations. For instance, when the Lisu language was categorized as similar to Burmese, British explorers hoped to learn about Burman prehistory through comparison with contemporary Lisu (Anderson 1871:118, 136; Davies 1909:366; Forrest 1908:239, 258, 269; Harris and Ma 1997:71; Rose and Brown 1911:251, 267). The "ethnogeographic boundaries" of linguistic groups was important as support for colonial plans to establish political boundaries by defining legitimate territorial rights on the basis of "homelands;" ethnic categorization served the mission of mapping and boundary making.

In addition, these categories allowed colonial classifiers to ignore indigenous concepts of power and the ways in which that power was based on exploitation of local resources, further justifying British claims to the need for their special entrepreneurial spirit (Baber 1882:87, 159 184-5; Colquhoun 1970:49; 2, 200, 203-4; Davies 1909:121-2, 192-3; Kingdon-Ward 1986;

Manchester Guardian 1886a; Manchester Guardian 1886b; Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(2)462-5, 527). For instance, in discussion of Kachin/Lisu relations, they ignored Kachin domination of mountain trade routes and mines and ways in which Kachin who shifted to Shan, or Lisu who shifted to Kachin modes of production, also shifted their dress and ethnic identity (Leach 1965; Friedman 1979; Maran 1967; Nugent 1982).

These systems contrast with the practices of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia polities, in which were based particular upland/lowland relations and ways of making a living, rather than types, and therefore as mutable as the social relations themselves. For instance, "Kachin" was a Burmese term for all "barbarians" of the northeastern frontier, an area which was linguistically and politically polyglot, and included upland groups such as Jinghpaw and Lisu. Similarly, many Tai polities used the term *khaa* (slave) to refer to uplanders, which later became an ethnonym. Another Burmese category referred to barbarians of a particular territory (Leach 1965:41). Southeast Asian categories were often congruent with ethnic zonation (*cf.* SUAN Secretariat 1990:15, 37) and in this recognized that people's identity shifted with how they made a living. Both names for other people and ethnonyms were territorially specific. For instance, Maru and Lashi people in Burma called the Lisu Lasi or Leur-seur. The Kachins called them Yawyin, and it was under this name they first became known in British colonial literature. The term Yawyin was supposedly a name given to the Kachin by the Chinese (Ye-Jen or Ye-Ren), meaning savages; the Kachin in turn used this term for Lisu people (Enriquez 1921:72; Kingdon-Ward 1986:201). The Shan called Lisu Li-hsaw or Cheli (Davies 1909:391). Chinese called them Lisaw, except in the eastern and central parts of Yunnan, where they called them Lisu (Enriquez 1921:72; Fraser 1922:1).

In recognizing that "language groups are not therefore hereditarily established, nor are they stable through time" (Leach 1965:49), Leach recognized the mutable, ephemeral nature of ethnicity in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. Specific ethnic identity at a given point in time is

closely associated with relations with neighboring peoples and polities (Jonsson 1996a; Jonsson 1996b; Moerman 1965).

Clothing, frequently used by westerners to classify branches of racial stock, was more likely to signal peoples' linkages to political economy, access to cotton cloth or thread and bright dyes, and degree of 'civilization' or submission to Chinese authorities. Dress is also of little help in ethnic classification because Lisu men adapted much of the style of the people around them, changing rapidly as their social environment changed. Women's dress varied by locale and lineage (Fraser 1922:iv), except for the women's turbans and jewelry, generally consisting of huge quantities of necklaces of beads, large ornamented turbans, and a profusion of cowries.¹⁸ Lisu further north or where in less contact with Chinese or their markets wore hempen clothes consisting of a long coat, pants, and gaiters. Those more in contact with the east wore shorter, brighter coats made of cotton likely to have been manufactured elsewhere; the women's clothes were often elaborately parti-colored on a blue background, decorated with narrow strips of embroidery (Rose and Brown 1911:258-9). The dress of the women on the China-Burma frontier near Sadon and Hta-gaw was exceptionally ornate (Fraser 1922:iv), perhaps indicating wealth and status, and, except for the use of cowries as decoration, seems similar to the dress of Lisu women in Thailand today. The Flowery Lisu do, indeed, wear brighter clothes, but this indicates access to different types of material for clothing and decorations and money to buy that material, thus economic conditions as much as conscious self-presentation (in comparison, see Mueggler 1998). Today in northern Thailand, Lisu from Burma are marked by women's dress of much more muted tone and simpler design than that of Thailand, and these do indeed mark difference, but in access to markets rather than named ethnic categorizations.

And yet, the color designations have taken on a sort of life of their own in the literature and according to Chinese accounts for visitors, Lisu in China today dress accordingly, as if these

¹⁸ As Chao points out, incorporation into the Chinese state was a gendered process in which men became more identified with civilization and literacy, and women identified with local traditional culture (Chao 1995:130).

are primordial ethnic markers. White Lisu on Chinese tourism web sites are depicted in beautiful pure white jackets, tunics, and pants. I find this suspect – how often would farmers in the mountains wear pure white outfits? However, Lisu also marked social and personal characteristics according to this designation. White Lisu told a Chinese researcher in 1946 that they had divided themselves into ‘Black’ and ‘White’ groups when members became too numerous and those who liked fighting separated to become the ‘Black’ group (Ch’en 1947:258). Put into place, ethnic categorizations developed their own dynamic, a means by which people themselves made statements about who they were in the political context in which they lived.¹⁹

The focus of observers on superficial features such as dress, housing, and practice of warfare ignored the contingent nature of categories of Black, White and Flowery as markers of ethnic identity arising out of adaptation to political relationships and economic conditions. Rather than fixed ethnicity, we see the flexibility of Lisu sociopolitical forms as adaptation to the political economies that enveloped them. Conversely, the focus on dress/housing/warfare highlighted difference among and within ethnic groups in southwest China to the exclusion of understanding continuities in social relations. For instance, essentially the same language was spoken from north to south, with observable gradations in dialect and practice. It seems to me that there was common ritual practice as well. This continuity is interesting considering the geographic spread of the Lisu population and is understandable as working from a prior text. Even those Lisu who moved beyond the Tibetan and Chinese spheres of influence worked from a common prior text of meanings in which experience was organized and understood by previous experience. People adapt to their immediate conditions on the basis of existing relations and meanings, but these arose out of past adaptations to what had once been immediate conditions, their history. This is

¹⁹Similar processes were occurring in Thailand in the late twentieth century as upland ethnic minority peoples of different groups took on the Thai lowland designation of them as a single group and acted in accordance with it, as with the NGO, the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association.

the element of historical contingency in social/cultural dynamics, a sort of double helix of adaptation and history.

Summary

We can consider these poles of variation in the social and political structure of Lisu:

- ▶ Egalitarian vs. hierarchical: Hierarchical societies occurred where chiefs arose, usually under the auspices or patronage of Naxi chiefs, or perhaps Tibetan rulers, and/or when they controlled a valuable trade route. However, there were not long-standing, permanent structures; structure oscillated between permanent and temporary depending on the political economy that existed. Where Lisu were more peripherally associated with Tibetan or Chinese states as in the far northwest, their societies were more egalitarian. As I will show in the next section, Lisu societies further south tended toward a predominantly egalitarian pattern supported by lineal segmentation, migration and opium, except where Lisu were tied into Kachin or Shan structures of hierarchy. In more central areas, they had closer relationships with Naxi, Tibetan, or Chinese states and there is more evidence of hierarchical social structure through engagement in relations of patronage and dependency as well as the shared upland/lowland rituals illustrated in Gros (1996).
- ▶ Temporary or short-term vs. permanent or long-term: Even where Lisu society had chiefs – hierarchical, with dependents or slaves – the structure tended not to be long-term or permanent. Temporary or short-term hierarchical structures could be so because of the influence of another power forcing them into a subordinate status without chiefs, such as the southern Lisu who were more fully incorporated into the Chinese empire and under direct Chinese imperial administration. In the intermediate conditions, imperial officials invested local leaders as *tusi* with quite a bit of autonomy as long as there were no uprisings

and the *tusi* provided safe transit for trade caravans, soldiers for protection of the state, and paid taxes or tribute. This would be an example of more permanent or long-term chieftainships in existence because of the support of a powerful state. Other leaders could arise for some period of time but fail to create a permanent structure of chieftaincy because they were unable to control the resources necessary to maintain such a structure. Examples of this might be ephemeral control of a mountain pass critical to trade. Maintaining wealth based on this would have depended on a number of factors: the value of the items typically traded along that route; the ebb and flow in use of different routes depending on safety, warfare, or ability to maintain exclusive control. One way to gain wealth and power was to prey upon on trade caravans; thus the reputation of Black Lisu for being robbers and brigands. Another way for a leader to maintain relations of debt and dependency was to acquire slaves through warfare, and another was to work as mercenaries for Naxi, Tibetans, and Chinese. Gros also points out that a chief's ritual role, acts of authority over the land and control of local spiritual power, underlay political centralization (1996, 2001). Chiefs required exclusive control of resources in order to maintain relations of debt and dependency and make displays of wealth and generosity but Lisu were rarely wealthy enough to maintain long-term chieftainships or in a position to maintain control of such resources (Gros 1996). There is a continuum here between degree of permanency and the influence of external states as it was generally only through state influence that a "permanent" chieftainship could come about.

- ▶ Sinification or Tibetan influence: Those who are non-Sinicized were often heavily influenced by Tibetan and indigenous ideologies of ritual power (I find it impossible to distinguish between the two given the material available). Examples are the northern Black Lisu villages who reportedly

did not have headmen and who appear to have been radically egalitarian with a high degree of feuding as opposed to the Black Lisu chiefs occasionally cited. This idea of Black Lisu chiefs needs to be explored, as does the idea of there being no headmen. It is not clear to me that these ever existed outside of a context of subordination to Naxi leaders who practiced leadership on indigenous and Tibetan models. As we have seen, these positions were increasingly supported by investment as *tusi* in the Chinese system. Lisu terms for headman varied from place to place, a marker of local relationships not indigenous to Lisu (Bradley, p.c., February 2005). There were other factors in Lisu culture that militated against debt and dependency and towards egalitarianism, closely tied in with migration and opium, which will be discussed in a later section. Where the Lisu population was acculturated to Chinese imperial culture, as in the southern part, they were loyal to *tusi* or local headmen, were reported as “docile” people, and there was no banditry or feuding.

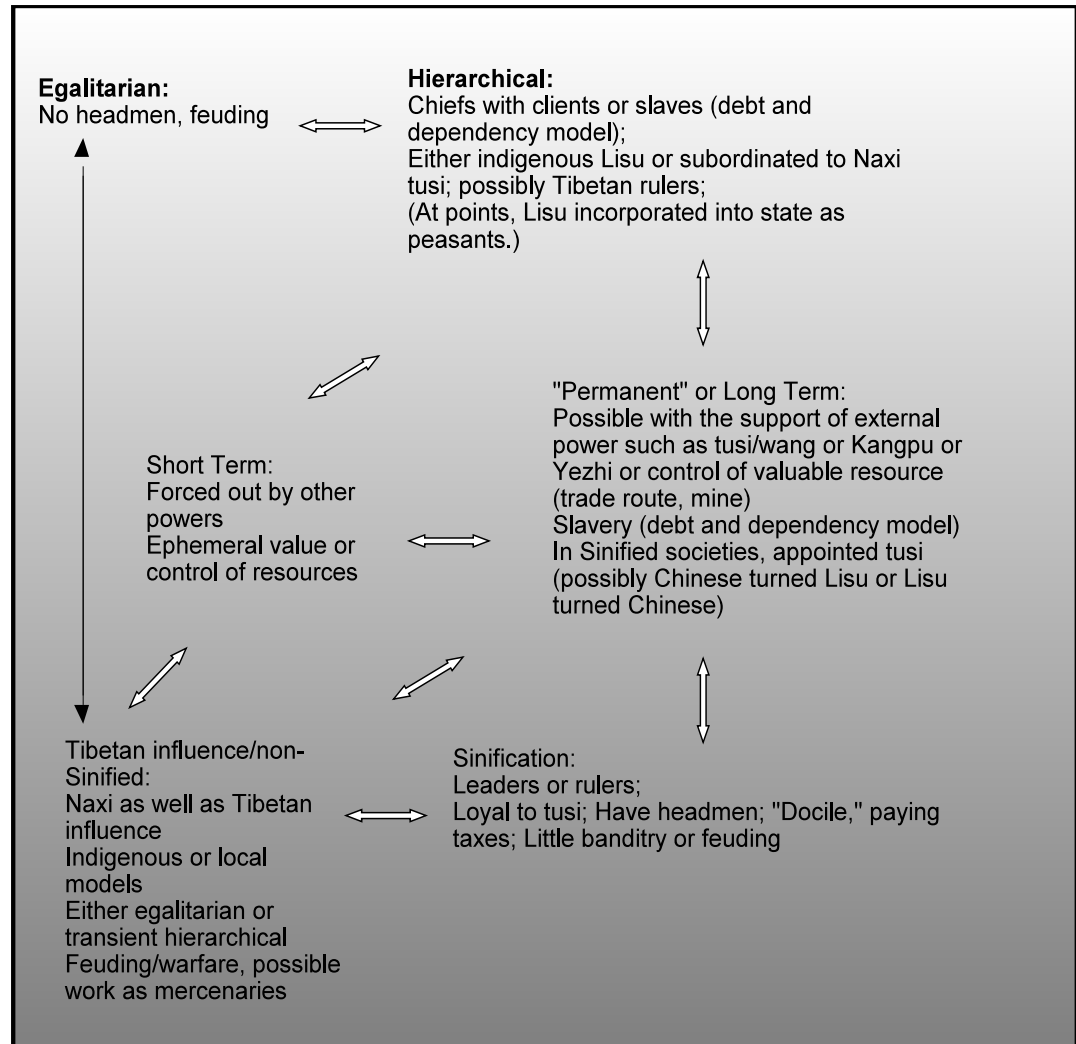


Figure 2.1: Poles of Variation in Lisu Social and Political Structure

In summary, Lisu social structure throughout its distribution could be either hierarchical or egalitarian depending on a leader's access to slaves and dependents, made possible by the access to the wealth available through trade (or brigandage), control of mines, work as mercenaries, or patronage by external states, and his perceived ability to control ritual forces through feasting. Thus, we see tendencies in transformations in Lisu society over a wide geographical and temporal range due to the range of political and economic conditions under which each particular population lived, which then appeared oscillatory.

Lisu Migration

Migration was a central element in Lisu land use, economy, and social organization in northern Thailand until the late 1970s. Reading the colonial and traveler reports that comment on the wide distribution of Lisu and their southward migration, it appears that migration has been an integral element of parts of Lisu society for over a century. To understand Lisu migration southwards into Burma and Thailand, we must consider where, how, and why. “Where” is relatively easily answered due to British concerns to control populations under their administration. “Why” and “how” are much more difficult. “How” is virtually unanswered, and I can only indicate through ethnographic analogy the likely methods of migration. Historical examples are, however, congruent with the details available for recent Lisu migration. “Why” can only be induced from reports and historical conditions. Understanding Lisu society and the political economic structure in which it occurred can shine light on individuals’ agency at that time. Nevertheless, there are suggestions of the facts of and pressures toward migration in these documents. The main question I address here is why a population of Lisu moved south so quickly at this particular point in time.

The migration of Lisu was not unique to the colonial period; earlier populations moved as well. Population movements appear to have been the default condition rather than the deviation to be explained. Lisu tradition is that they moved southwards from Sichuan around the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries (Harris and Ma 1997:171 citing Yang, *et al.* 1990). Other historical research corroborates this; the Lisu settled in the Upper Salween as a result of fighting between the Tibetans and Chinese in the 1760s (Gros 2001; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000). Land transfer from local minority populations occurred with shifts in political balance as victors gave land to their subjects. For instance, land was transferred from the local population in Weixi to Tibetan families (Gros 1996). Daniels writes that Lisu began migrating in the late seventeenth century, from the Upper Salween to the far northern Burmese borderlands in the face of incursions from Chinese (Daniels 1994). Sometimes land transfer was less direct,

alienated through commerce, debt, or corruption (see Giersch 2001:83-84). By the early 1800s, the Lipo, a closely related eastern Lisu group, were losing land to Han immigrants and environmental degradation from over-use, resulting in rebellion (Daniels 1994).

Many observers recognized that a large number of Lisu and other non-Han peoples migrated in the mid/late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, there are few specific recorded cases of Lisu migration in Yunnan in English, and certainly none at the household or village level.²⁰ None of the above accounts give specific examples of Lisu migration within Yunnan or of emigration out of Yunnan in the nineteenth century. However, it is possible to understand migration through records of Lisu immigrating into northern Burma. Also, knowledge of Lisu society in Yunnan can help us to question and refine the dominant explanations given for Lisu migration.

Lisu as Refugees?

Common explanations of why Lisu migrated share a view of being people without a home, refugees swept before the maelstrom of the "Han march toward the tropics" and the bedlam of rebellion, banditry and corrupt government, to be finally spit out of the whirlpool on the fringes of China, Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. Lisu have been depicted as weak, a dying race occupying the mountains from necessity rather than choice because that was all that was left to them by their more powerful neighbors (Davies 1909:392; Goullart 1955:114; Rose and Brown 1911:250; Wiens 1967). More recent researchers have spoken of the Lisu as fleeing southward to avoid government and high taxes as well as banditry and social disorder (Dessaint 1972a:13-14; Du 1999:26, 28, 35, 40; Stevenson 1981:346). Such views of Lisu as a displaced people are upheld by a self-image of refugee status. Dessaint gives the translation of their name as "those who have come down" and some of his informants said "lisu" meant "outlaw" or "rebel"

²⁰ There are such sources in Chinese (Bradley, p.c., February 2005), but I do not read Chinese.

(1971a:71), an ethnonym that indicates their status vis-à-vis the state and seems more a state designation than a self-appellation. Hutheesing cites an educated Lisu man that "lisu" means people who always moved, who lost out (1990a:35). In present day Yunnan, "lisu" is said to mean "disperse" (Chen *et al.* 2003:5).²¹ I have heard it conjectured by academics that the population of Lisu who eventually settled in Thailand were the losers, the poor and weak driven up into the mountains and south before the sweep of by more powerful groups, as compared to the population that remained in Yunnan. Others have claimed that the Lisu of Thailand are only peripherally related to the Lisu population living in Yunnan due to Chinese admixture. The problem with such accounts is that they consider only population purity and large scale movements; they obviate consideration of Lisu agency.

Lisu Accounts of Migration

Most Lisu in northern Thailand were uninterested in the specifics of their origins and migration history. When asked, people responded with information about places they had lived as children, or where their father or grandfathers had lived before coming into the area of their current village. Lisu in northern Thailand have a few stories of their origins and migration. Some of the songs sung at weddings in Thailand were sagas of migration, a listing of places they had been. These songs, sung only at important events, were in archaic language (Hutheesing 1990a:35).

Hutheesing collected and translated songs and some stories about Lisu origins. Their origin stories are not unlike stories found throughout the region, of a brother and sister being brought to life, their incestuous marriage after a period of trials, and eventual allocation of land to all of the peoples of the region (Hutheesing 1990a:2; *cf.* Proschan 2001 for the ubiquity of such

²¹ Bradley, the leading scholar on the linguistics of this branch of Tibeto-Burman, puts it as *li* = forest, jungle and *su* = people. Curiously, some elder males in Revealed River Village also called a the Khalij pheasant *lisu*, and compared the swaying 'tails' of Lisu women's dress to the beautiful tail of this local mountain pheasant.

tales in the upland regions to the southwest of Lisu territory).²² Other stories served as a sort of mythological charter legitimating peoples' rights to territory, especially poignant in light of loss of land to Han immigrants. One account tells of the marriage of the daughter of the Lisu king to the son of the Chinese king. Antipathy between Lisu and Chinese arose from the failure of that marriage because the Chinese groom was infertile, unfaithful, a drinker, a gambler, and an opium smoker (reflecting complaints made by Lisu women of Lisu men in northern Thailand in the late twentieth century). After that, the Chinese succeeded in conquering them. "After the Lisu king had been killed, the Lisu people did not have a place to stay. Even when they killed and fought the Chinese, it was not possible. They fled everywhere, went in all directions. Since then the Lisu have no country ..." (Hutheesing 1990a:25). In this account, the tellers claim to have originated in "Lai country, Ti [northern Yunnan] country, where the Huang He river (the Yellow River) is, about 4000 years ago" (Hutheesing 1990a:25). Another type of story is what Hutheesing called "memorized migrations," recounting specific incidents of warfare or conflict with the Chinese, Burmese, "Khala" (Wa), Black Lahu, and bandits before migrating further south to Wa territory in Burma (Hutheesing 1990a:25-26). These stories imply a number of points about Lisu identity and ethnic relations. For instance, such ritual chants laying out paths to the tribal "homeland" are said to be common among Tibeto-Burman peoples (Blackburn 2003/2004). But they tell us little about the historical specifics of migration itself.

Understanding Lisu Migration

Lisu migration is typically attributed to two forces. One is warfare or Chinese pacification of upland peoples, especially those who refused to submit to the Chinese government (Hutheesing 1990a:34-35; Dessaint 1972a:13). The other is the influx of Han immigrants to the

²² Despite such charter myths, it appears that few populations lived anywhere from time immemorial. The myths have more to do with ethnic identity and relations, probably in the context of neighboring states (Proschan 2001).

southwest of China (Wiens 1967). That is, the Lisu were weak, they fled; or they migrated because of “their persistent desire for an independent lifestyle” (Daniels 1994; see also Lewis and Lewis 1984 for desire for autonomy as a dominant Lisu social characteristic). Yet, it is clear that Lisu as a whole were not weak and passive, nor were they primordially freedom-loving – they had chiefs and slaves in particular times and places, in some cases they rebelled against Chinese domination.

A main factor was the demographic transformation of Yunnan and the resultant competition as Han and non-Han forms of land management conflicted (*cf.* Daniels 1994; Lee 1979; Rose and Brown 1911:24). One feasible response was to migrate in search of new land. These were not isolated peoples with little knowledge of the outside world. They were often multilingual, they traded and traveled. Many did migrate, and migrated before the extensive and far-flung migration that carried Lisu populations to northern Thailand beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and culminating in the mid-twentieth century. Yet, we must also take account of the fact that most Lisu and other mountain minorities did not leave Yunnan; many people stayed and assimilated or maintained a precarious autonomy in far northwestern Yunnan until the 1950s. Others rebelled (Daniel 1994; Gros 1996). And even when assimilation occurred, it did not guarantee that people would stay. It appears that the main population that migrated from the southern and central groups of Lisu was primarily Flowery Lisu. The irony is that those ‘independence-loving’ Lisu who moved south were in fact the most Sinicized of the Lisu populations, considered more “civilized” and “sophisticated” than the Black Lisu (Hanks and Hanks 2001:78).

Nevertheless, these explanations of Lisu migration in the mid-nineteenth century are unsatisfactory on several points. One is that it leaves a key point unexplained. Attributing the southward migration to warfare in Yunnan is an incomplete explanation as it was a region of warfare and violence before the mid-nineteenth century. Another is that such statements do nothing to explain the mechanisms, specific strategies, and hoped-for goals of Lisu who migrated.

These explanations are based on forces external to Lisu society with no consideration of the internal dynamics of migration. What is lacking in these “explanations” of Lisu and other Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples’ migration is twofold: why so far and at this time, and the mechanisms of migration, what enabled people to migrate at this time so rapidly? Explaining Lisu migration would ideally explain which populations moved and why. Migration is linked with the process of segmentation through ultimogeniture and definitely linked with territorial expansion (Gros 2001b), as older sons move out to establish households.²³ This is in keeping with what we know of Lisu social structure in the post-WWII period. We also need to consider why Lisu populations moved south rather than elsewhere. Thus, we can see how both external and internal demographic processes were involved in migration. Two factors facilitated and pulled Lisu migration. The first and most significant was opium. The other was the attraction of a more secure life under the British in Burma and then in northern Thailand, where state control was weak.

Chinese migration pressure did drive non-Han peoples’ to seek out new places to live; the rebellions of the mid-nineteenth century did cause people to flee. However, it would be more accurate to attribute Lisu migration out of the Chinese sphere of influence at this time not to just being pushed out by Han immigration, unrest, or pacification, but to increasing state interference (Du 1999:26, 35, 28, 40) combined with weakened central administration (Bello 2005). The unsettled political conditions in Yunnan and the attractions of a more secure life under the British in Burma were both a push and a pull toward migration southward. This encompasses the consequences to upland minorities of the demographic transformation of Yunnan; the problems of warfare, unrest, and corrupt functionaries; and the concept of Lisu as seeking autonomy – an emphasis on freedom from obligations best understood in the context of debt, dependency, and rulership in the Upper Salween and Chinese alienation of land through indebtedness (Giersch 2001; Gros 1996; Gros 2001) – in a way that more accurately summarizes the political economic conditions of the time and opens up a way to talk about Lisu agency in this migration. It was a

²³ Tai chronicles demonstrate similar segmentation and territorial expansion (Wyatt 1982:9).

confluence of factors that led to some Lisu peoples' decision to move southwards. Burma and northern Thailand were places-in-between with little effective government control, particularly of opium cultivation (Maule 2002; Tagliacozzo 2004). Dessaint states that Lisu migrated to avoid high taxes and banditry, but also in search of good opium lands (1972a:13-14). The introduction of opium as a cash crop transformed the economy of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. It transformed internal dynamics, one result of which I believe to have been an increase in population, and subsidized and impelled Lisu migration. This explains to some extent why a significant population of Lisu migrated as far south and as quickly as they did in the mid to late nineteenth century without resort to an explanation that depends entirely on external forces, as if Lisu people were flotsam before the storm. Thus, opium became a stimulus for migration as significant as the political economic conditions were a stimulus against staying.

To argue for understanding Lisu agency is not to say that rebellions and banditry, warlords and state penetration, were not factors in their migration. Peoples acted within the nexus of this particular political economy, but to discuss migration only in these terms is incomplete, to view Lisu as mere automatons in the machinery of circumstances controlled by others or intentionalized forces. Therefore, the specific facts of the southward migration must be traced as much as is possible given the limitations on data available. The best information available is colonial accounts of Lisu migrations into Burma

Lisu Migration into British Burma

Lisu migration became marked and documented when they migrated into Burma. This corresponded with the demarcation of political boundaries in the 1890s out of the complex array of smaller, relatively autonomous polities of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. It was not that these border/frontier relations had never been considered by Chinese authorities, but that Chinese interests had been based on very different categories (Giersch 2001). And so, Lisu cross international borders and became trans-boundary people defined by their central subsistence

strategies, swiddening and growing opium as a cash crop. They were labeled and defined as a problem on the world stage. The migration of Lisu households into Burma corresponded with British colonial control and clashed with British plans for revenue production through control of the natural resources of Upper Burma. Despite being chased out by colonial authorities, Lisu remained in Upper Burma and continued to immigrate on a household by household basis because of the relatively peaceful and ordered conditions in Upper Burma under Shan princes and British colonial authorities, compared to Yunnan at that time. Thailand, in turn, was attractive for similar reasons and because of the availability of open lands. Lisu households took advantage of market opportunities but sought to isolate themselves from government interference by living in more remote areas, a strategy born out of the contingent past in Yunnan.

It is in British colonial documents that we first find what became common assumptions about the nature of Lisu society and economy formed. The perception of westerners in the late nineteenth and twentieth century was that Tibeto-Burman speakers always moved southward (Davies 1909:391; Enriquez 1921:72). Not only migration, but its direction, was essentialized as a racial characteristic. The Lisu, Davies observed, were particularly enterprising and avid emigrants (Davies 1909:391). Such characterization of Lisu people and culture occurred well into the late twentieth century and is not uncommon in Thai and international development reports today. The British colonial government attempted to forestall this immigration. From the British point of view, there was insufficient land for them and they considered the Lisu to be non-productive destroyers of forest – swiddeners who would not contribute to the development of the colony. These expanding pioneering migratory patterns were considered to be due to the increasing population of Lisu in Yunnan (Hertz 1912:73; Fraser 1922:vi; Renard 1996:35 quoting Butterfield 1920:77-81), which could not be supported on the type of high mountains on which they settled. They “devastated” the forest, apparently did not have enough land to allow rotating swiddening, and moved on. Lisu migrants were the despair of the British government, although Enriquez thought the habit of clearing around their villages was a “healthy” one (Enriquez 1921:70). Thus Lisu were

early categorized as a southwards-migrating group who lived in “high cold and barren spot[s]” and destroyed the surrounding forest for miles around by swiddening until they moved on to new forests (Enriquez 1921:72).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were several migrations into Burmese territory. The Lisu population was large enough that the British feared they might eventually rival the Kachin in numbers (Kingdon-Ward 1986:201, 210, 304), although they never did. By 1900, 1,454 Lisu were reported as living in the Shan States (Census of India Burma Reports, Pt. 2, table 10, cited in Hanks and Hanks 2001:78), including households established in Möng Tum and Möng Hsat in Kengtung, Southern Shan States, near to the border with northern Thailand (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)588; Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(2)366, 486). In the Kachin Hills, Lisu lived chiefly in the neighborhood of Sadôn (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)388). They were found scattered in small villages throughout the Northern Shan States and Möng Mit (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)388), in North Hsen Wi, where there were about 1,000 people in 20 villages, with similar numbers in Tawng Pen Loi Long and Möng Mit (Momeik) (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)587). Lisu immigrated into villages around Mogok, Bhâmo, Sima, Sadon, and, further north, Panwa (Enriquez 1921:70). These resulted in four villages in Bhâmo, five (105 households) in Sima, twenty villages in Sadon, and five or six villages in Panwa (Enriquez 1921:70). From 1907-1909, an “extraordinary wave” of Lisu immigration swept into Bernardmyo and Mong Mit in the Shan States, at approximately 23°, 96° 30' (George 1915:45). Most of these were further southwest than any previous immigration, beyond Kachin territory (see Leach 1965:23, Map 2).

These two migrations are noteworthy on two points. First, the mass of population was unusual; more recent ethnographic evidence is that Lisu tended to move on a household by household basis, not as entire villages (Hanks and Hanks 2001:78-76; Dessaint 1972a). Second, the “wave” corresponded to a significantly successful anti-opium campaign that was one of the

last edicts of the Qing government (Meyer and Parssinen 1998:2, 46; Trocki 1999:129; W. Walker 1991:14-16).

The immigration into Bernardmyo/Mogok was well documented by the district commissioner. The territory was a part of the Ruby Mines District, of great value to the British and the key element in their annexation of Upper Burma (Turrell 1988). It was administered as a Shan State (George 1915:1). The Lisu came in “large bodies” and established themselves on prominent positions between Mogok and Möng Mit. The colonial government considered them to be “unauthorized intruders” of no economic value and absolutely useless as a revenue-producing community. This was especially so because the region had increasingly come under irrigated rice terrace cultivation and (apparently) cash cropping, and thus was progressively economically profitable to the government, as well as evidence of development of a peaceful and prosperous society (*cf.* Hertz 1912; News of the World 1886), part of the charter mythology of British colonialism. The British were eventually able to “dislodge” them, but only with difficulty because Lisu lived in isolated and inaccessible spots. Where they went from here is not clear. In British eyes, they had caused considerable damage to the forest in a very short period of time, in part because they had been too isolated to be under direct British control (Enriquez 1921:70). But eventually they returned; there are about 15,000 Lisu in and around Mogok today (Bradley, p.c., February 2005).

A smaller population of Lisu who had settled in the area before annexation was allowed to remain on the Bernardmyo Plateau. This was a settlement of seven villages with a total population of 1,350 people (about 193 people per village). This group was still considered a problem due to their agricultural practices.

According to their usual custom, they selected the highest summits for their wasteful energies and, before their activities were stopped by the formation of Forest Reserves, they had cleared a large portion of the Bernardmyo valley of virgin forest and left it a mere treeless savannah of coarse grass. During the last ten years they have been forced by restrictions on their [swidden] cutting to adopt other means of livelihood, and have embarked on the cultivation of potatoes, which was first introduced when a British Cantonment was established at Bernardmyo (George 1915:44-45).

With some degree of security and the appropriate environmental conditions, and under regulatory pressure from the British, the Lisu who migrated to Bernardmyo were capable of building terraces for irrigated rice and did so. Even more importantly, the establishment of a British military station gave them an opportunity to plant a cash crop, potatoes. While government administrators universally accused Lisu of seeking isolation, in fact most Lisu settlements are chosen for both privacy from administrative control and accessibility to trade opportunities. Note that they took advantage of the cash crop opportunities created by the presence of British troops.

These conditions would have proven an incentive to the second group of Lisu to move to this area; wherever the living was good, others followed. The pattern here appears to be one that was common in northern Thailand until migration was prohibited in the late twentieth century. That is, a small group of Lisu found an area for settlement based on its availability, suitability for swiddening, and cash cropping opportunities, cleared it, and then sent for family members to join them. We shall see this pattern again in discussing the establishment of the Thirty Thousand cluster of villages. This pattern of chain migration is related to ultimogeniture and lineage segmentation (Gros 2001b), in which as each son matures he must make his own way, seeking and opening new land to cultivate.

In looking for new forests to settle, Lisu moved southwards. Why? It appears in part to have been the path of least resistance. Significant parts of Upper Burma had become depopulated in the decades between 1876 and the mid-1920s, the population having moved south for reasons mentioned but unexplained by Stevenson (1981:39-40). Scott and Hardiman note, however, the civil wars in the Shan States and disturbances following annexation led to depopulation in many districts of Upper Burma. There was a plague in the 1850s and war had resulted much of the population of Kengtung being moved to Chiang Rai (Bradley, p.c., February 2005). Hsen Wi was depopulated by warfare from 1867-1897; after the end of hostilities, in a period of nine years, the number of villages increased six times. This was one of the places into which Lisu migrated (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(2) 205). Möng Hsat, Kengtung, was

depopulated due to warfare with Fang (northern Thailand) before Lisu moved in (Scott and Hardiman II:(2) 366). Thailand similarly suffered from emptying of lands by warfare in the past; the people of Chiang Mai and other northern city states had mostly been removed in 1777 by the Burmese to towns in the Shan States (Colquhoun 1970:117). Furthermore, after Pax Britannicus was established, these areas were relatively safe and untroubled. By the mid-1920s, Public Works houses were built every 12 miles or so along the road to Putao (Fort Hertz, north of Myitkyina), and it was traveled by British hunters, civil officers, and military policemen who prevented feuding and banditry. There were no attempts to 'improve' or 'develop' the local population. The goal was only to pacify, not to provide any social services (Stevenson 1981:37). Decades later, upland peoples remembered the time in the Shan States as one of peace and prosperity (Hanks and Hanks 2001:24, 283).

A number of Lisu households also migrated into territory that is now northern Thailand. In the far north, around Chiang Rai, Lisu households began to appear in 1896, with two more populations moving there in 1900 and 1920 (Hanks and Hanks 2001:34-35, 39, 41-43, 49, 54).²⁴ Here, there was a great deal of vacant land due to battles among Tai principalities (*müang*). The goal of pre-modern warfare was not to gain territory but people, who would be removed as prisoners-of-war and established in new villages in the conquering prince's *müang* or *möng* (Nimmanhaeminda 1965; Wyatt 1982). As a result, many parts of northern Thailand were sparsely populated. There are no records available of this time because the wild, uncultivated peripheries were of little interest to local principalities except as sources of valuable forest products and buffers against invasions by other principalities (Jonsson 1996a; Jonsson 1996b), so that we have no clear sense of numbers of immigrants, locations of settlements, type of agriculture, or how long they stayed. Later in the mid-twentieth century, larger populations of Lisu migrated into Thailand because of political conditions. Groups moved from Burma to northern

²⁴ Another population of Lisu settled in Doi Chang in 1918, located outside of the Hanks's study area (Bradley, p.c., February 2005).

Thailand during World War II to avoid the fighting between the Japanese and British, much of which took place in the Kachin States. After the communist victory in China, Christian Lisu moved to northern Burma and on to northeastern India. Others moved to Thailand from Burma and Yunnan in the 1950s, some recruited by certain Thai officials as part of their control of the opium trade, others as part of the Kuo Min Tang (Nationalist Chinese) (Bradley, p.c., February 2005; W. Walker 1991:208). Finally, many came to Thailand starting in the 1960s as the Burmese political situation fell apart, particularly in the Shan States (Hanks and Hanks 2001:24, 225). Cross-border travel and agriculture were still common and necessary in the 1990s; I met one middle-aged widow from Burma who had married a local widower and relocated to Thailand (bringing with her a sack of opium poppy seeds that could no longer be used in this part of northern Thailand).

In questioning why Lisu moved south, we can also consider the political conditions discussed previously. Lisu and others leaving Yunnan did so in part because of the political and economic conditions: rapacious landlords, corrupt government officials, and wandering bandit gangs; they had faced landlords, indicating that they had become dependents of a powerful *tusi* or landlord, or that their land had been alienated. The move into Burma was likely motivated by the desire to find land that they could cultivate for 'free,' that is, without relations of dependency. The Lisu cultural emphasis on freedom resonates in the historical context of the political significance of relations of debt and dependency in the Tibetan borderlands, and of government penetration, Han immigration, and land alienation starting in the mid-nineteenth century. Lisu and other upland immigrants also sought the right to make a living without the multiple taxes, prohibitions, and confiscation of their opium crop that had come to typify Yunnan in the warlord period (W. Walker 1991:36). This is a strategy of over-taxed peasantry. As was common in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia, subjects could "vote with their feet" if the conditions of their dependency were too onerous.

A Period of Unrest

The pressures of Han immigration to Yunnan, the extension of Chinese administration and then its disintegration in the mid-nineteenth century, and decreased opportunities for trade, all brought about many incidents of unrest. For the British, this was an opportunity to demonstrate their superior administration and extend more outright control over areas they wanted allocated to their territory in Burma; as a result, these were carefully recorded. One account by District Commissioner Townsend is of a Lisu armed rebellion in Chinese territory in 1901 that threatened to spill over to British Burma territory.

The uprising took the form of a revitalization movement provoked by the increased penetration of Chinese control. About May,²⁵ a Lisu near Paknoi Prang announced that he had been visited by a spirit in a vision who taught him the art of writing. His writings were in characters resembling Chinese that he said were messages from heaven calling on Lisu to assemble and resist any action that might be taken against him by the Chinese. By November, he had a following of 200 men. These writings were widely distributed throughout the uplands and copies of these letters were sent to the Lisu headmen on the British Burma side, who passed them on to the British colonial authorities in order to find out whether the British would join the Lisu in a move against the Chinese. They planned to mine precious metals and were afraid that the Chinese would interfere (Hertz 1912:72-3). Despite the millennial elements of this movement, the goal of mining seems feasible given economic strategies common in the region. Their fear of Chinese interference also seems realistic given the contemporary history in Yunnan of conflict between Han immigrants and indigenous miners, which had in part precipitated the Panthay Rebellions. The Panthay Rebellions in the mid-nineteenth century had resulted in enormous physical

²⁵ May would have been the beginning of the planting season. Fields are usually cleared and burned in April, then planted in May when there is some slight rain to soften the soil. Crops need to germinate before the downpours start later in the month (although here I speak from experience in Thailand; this being further north, farmers might have been only just clearing fields). At any rate, this would have been a very busy time in the agricultural year and an unusual time to start political activity unless people had lost their land and their livelihood.

destruction, breakdown of local administrative, security, and fiscal institutions, and a “palpable decline in popular morale,” had decimated the population of Yunnan, urban areas were left empty shells. Most significantly for this discussion, it destroyed trade for decades following, in part because the main traders were the Muslim Yunnanese who had rebelled (Anderson 1871:117, 136; Baber 1882:167, 172, 174,183; Feuerwerker 1975; Hill 1998:15; Lee 1982b:302; Turrell 1988:148; Wang Jiangping 1996:211-2).

D.C. Townsend, however, feared that the Lisu were really looking for land their population in Yunnan had increased and there was no room for expansion, or that they sought to recover land from which they had been ousted by Chinese immigrants and that their leader sought to raise “the whole of his tribe” against the Chinese in an attempt to gain it back. Either way, they presented a danger of unrest. By January of 1902, the uprising at Puyapa numbered 400-500 men. The leader collected tribute and supplies. The constant passing of armed Lisu back and forth caused unrest among other groups on either side of the Burma/Yunnan border. On February 13, 1902, a quarrel resulted in a fight between some local Chinese and trans-Paknoi Kachins, and the Lisu joined in on the side of the Kachins. The trans-Paknoi Kachins, who had approached British officials to ask for advice, refrained from attacking the Chinese. The Lisu fled and their settlement was burned down (Hertz 1912:72-73). The Lisu continued to attack Chinese posts, in one case successfully, but the Chinese eventually suppressed this uprising, in part by burning local villages and killing the inhabitants, both on the Yunnan and the Burmese side of the border. This, of course, provided an opportunity for the British to assert their control over the unadministered territories of Northern Burma and delineate what they considered proper Chinese administration (Hertz 1912:73-74).²⁶

²⁶ They demanded and received a fine from the Chinese for the outrage against British sovereignty, not because of atrocities committed against the Lisu, and had the Chinese abolish taxes on the main trade route between Bhâmo (Burma) and Tengchong (China) that the British considered illegal. The British had used the incident to effectively advance their economic and political interests.

In another case in October of 1905, British travelers exploring the Salween met a group of Lisu warriors with huge cross bows north of Chengjia, a town nearly 100 kilometers north of Tengchong. They were led by a local *ni pa* (the Lisu term for the guardian of the “Old Grandfather” shrine, but the British again translated this as “prophet”). The leader carried a piece of paper covered with Chinese style characters; he said it was instructions from heaven to go and kill the headman of Chengjia. They requested the help of the British, who refused. Weeks later, the British heard rumors of a slaughter of huge numbers of Lisu by Chinese troops from Chengjia. The Lisu people fled north; the Chengjia people (many of whom might also have been Lisu) fled south (Forrest 1908:248). The precipitating incident was rooted in contestation of the Lao-wa *tusi*’s control of the region north of Chengjia. In general, the Lisu people refused to recognize the *tusi*’s authority but when he attempted to levy double tribute from these villages, one of the headmen rustled twelve of the *tusi*’s cattle; in return, the Lao-wo *tusi* kidnaped the headman’s son and seized his salt. This particular uprising followed a severe famine (1904-1905), when people expected a proportionate lifting of taxes (Forrest 1908:244, 248-249, 258).

In keeping with patterns of disputes over spheres of authority, Lisu and other local headmen made ceremonial offerings to the British traveling party, explained their grievances against the *tusi* and requested their patronage (Forrest 1908:248-249). Aside from the fact that the British undertook this exploration to establish their territorial claims both topographically and ethnographically (Forrest 1908:239),²⁷ and thus may have been biased to see their own rule recognized as superior, it is not unlikely that local people actively sought to put themselves under British rule. In another case, Kachin/Lashi villages complained of the Chinese officials of Tengchong seizing their cattle and young women as tribute. They requested that the British government take over the territory “and provide means for settling disputes, suppressing feuds,

²⁷ Forrest writes: The “... object in making the journey was both political and geographical: first, to discover whether the Salwin and Irawadi dividing range formed a distinct geographical and ethnographical boundary between north-west Yunnan and Upper Burma – a fact which the local Chinese authorities, with direct knowledge, and for their own purposes, denied ...” (Forrest 1908:239).

and regulating taxation” (Forrest 1908:241-2). On his trip north of Chengjia, a British expedition was ceremonially offered gifts of rice, eggs, and/or honey by village deputations (Forrest 1908:244, 247, 248-249, 254, 262).²⁸

On the more millennial/religious movement end of the continuum of uprisings was trouble that occurred in the early 1920s among a village of Flowery Lisu in Upper Burma. A spirit calling itself “Jesus” revealed itself to a village and imposed laws similar to those of Christianity – forbidding the worship of other spirits, bearing false witness, drinking of wine, for instance – but also decreed that the villagers should not work. The Jesus spirit promised wealth and great herds of livestock if the villagers would follow its laws. Among its edicts was one to abandon cultivation and wait for it at a mountain top, or be burned alive. Unsurprisingly, the spirit did not appear and the villagers went hungry; this went on for several years until in 1934, representatives of the village sought out Protestant missionaries in the Upper Salween/Mekong to find out more about this Jesus spirit. They were among Isobel Kuhn’s early converts (Dick 1987:80-84). There were also stories of a Lisu king who would come and return them to their rightful place (Fraser 1922:xi).

The British had become players on the stage of Northern Mainland Southeast Asian politics. At this point, they were viewed as but one among many in the scene of multiple spheres of authority but apparently an attractive alternative to some people. British rule appeared of pragmatic utility to people accustomed to seek out the best deal in rulership, the most fair, the most potent and efficacious authority to which to attach themselves. The extension of the Chinese state further into western Yunnan while it simultaneously suffered the weakening of central administration and consequent corruption made the British in Burma look like a good alternative authority. In the British, people sought patrons similar to others they knew – Tibetan, Chinese, Naxi – but in so doing submitted themselves not to a somewhat autonomous tributary

²⁸ It is possible that these offerings were part of a welcoming ritual common through much of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia in which eggs and rice are offered to guests. Eggs and rice are also offered in certain healing and divination ceremonies. Other Lisu headman gave them presents of eggs and honey, or a fowl, or trays of rice, eggs, and vegetables, and other items, which the elders presented to the British on their knees (see Forrest 1908:254).

relationship based on shifting alliances and control of people through demonstration of ritual potency, but to a permanent subject status based on control of territory. The British colonial government sought to maintain a status quo and prevent uprisings and population movements that would upset their district budgets, resource allocations, and commerce. Lisu 'prophets' were seen as a threat to prosperity, or as an opportunity to assert rights over the Chinese. Their goals were to maintain the Pax Britannica for the purposes of expansion of trade; the prospect of economic gain overrode other considerations, as in the case of the opium trade.²⁹

Population Pressure

The migration of Flowery Lisu, the southern Lisu population in Yunnan, came shortly after the spread of opium as a cash crop. Population pressure was part of what pulled people south. One side of this was population pressure due to alienation of land by Han immigrants. Another element was an increase in population among the Lisu. There were reports of increasing population among southern Lisu by observers in the 20th century (Hertz 1912:73; Renard 1996:35, quoting Butterfield 1920:77-81; Fraser 1922:vi). The meaning and significance of population pressure are necessary to understanding why opium was significant in Lisu migration.

Population pressure is not an easily measured and marked object; it is, rather, a process understood on the basis of several assumptions. The first assumption is that an ecosystem contains its own limits to growth, in essence a function of carrying capacity (Hardesty 1977:210; Hawley 1986:54). Carrying capacity has been defined as the theoretical limit to which a population can grow and still be sustainably supported by its environment (Hardesty 1977:286;

²⁹ Profit seems to have been an organizing principle of the culture of Victorian England's governing class; profit and value are frequent themes throughout these administrative and colonial exploration reports. One account from a London newspaper told of a chaplain who had received the Victoria Cross for his role in a battle in India. He rescued a wounded man in the heat of battle, and in doing so, lost his charger, "Unfortunately, the mare, a very valuable animal, broke loose and was never seen again" (Daily News (London) 1900). It seems to me that having your horse abandon you in the middle of a fight would have been of far more concern than its monetary value.

Sutton and Harmon 1973:279), the maximum population that an environment can support indefinitely without leading to degradation (Ellen 1982:41); or a point around which population varies (Sutton and Harmon 1973:155). The utility of the concept of carrying capacity is debatable for humans because there are so many social and cultural factors involved (Hawley 1986:53), but it remains useful in that it contains within it the concept of limiting factors (Hardesty 1977:196). The limits, however, can change. Therefore, carrying capacity is dynamic, changing with a multitude of factors (Hardesty 1977:195-206). This is important for understanding the variable nature of population pressure – what the limits are and when a population reaches them and how the limits can be altered by human adaptations. The key question, then, is what the limiting factors were on carrying capacity that led to the experience of population pressure (*cf.* Ellen 1982:47-48). I use carrying capacity here as a useful short hand for discussing the intersection of several limiting factors and when population pressure occurs. The long-term security of any population is not based on its average production and consumption, but on the way it is able to weather periods of scarcity (Netting 1977:33).

Carrying capacity can be expanded – and population pressure alleviated – by technological advances (Sutton and Harmon 1973:73, 216). Thus, a limiting factor can be negated. But with humans – keeping in mind that it is populations that adapt, not cultures (Ellen 1982:244) – very much more than technology must be taken into account, such as culturally constructed consumption levels; the intensity of use of land; pests on crops; human working capacity; and land tenure systems (Ellen 1982:42; Hardesty 1977:204-206). Therefore, understanding population pressure requires consideration of institutional arrangements such as kinship organization and the nature and efficiency of political and administrative control (Hardesty 1977:205-206; Ellen 1982:44). Finally, we need to consider system boundaries and integration of local economies into regional, national, and global systems (Ellen 1982:45; Hardesty 1977:205). But the goal of this is not to determine which variables constrain or determine; the problem for the anthropologist is to assess the degree and character of the variable's flexibility. The effects of the

environment are mediated by social relations and the cultural meanings attributed to them in a community. These are products of a contingent historical sequence (Ellen 1982:50-51).

Population pressure and how populations or local communities deal with it must be studied in the framework of concrete historical processes (Bennett 1976:199). The case of the Irish Potato Famine, for instance, demonstrates the intersection of ideology, political economy, and agricultural biology (or mycology, in this case) (Zuckerman 1998). With humans, there are no simple biological processes. But there are discernable significant factors, and their consequences for populations, environment, and human adaptations can be delineated.

Political, geological and climatological instability resulted in great precariousness from year to year in food production and in consumption in western Yunnan. These were the main limiting factors in this ecosystem. In addition, salt was a significant limiting factor. Without salt, people suffer goiters and thyroid disease. Salt is also an important preservative, enabling people to keep vegetables through annual periods of scarcity.³⁰ Commercial activities were oriented toward buying salt as well as food grains. Even today, salt remains so significant that in northern Burma, Alan Rabinowitz found Lisu hunters who sold the parts of exotic animals to China in order to buy salt. He therefore devised a scheme of subsidizing salt imports in return for their commitment to stop hunting (Rabinowitz 2001).

Opium eliminated a number of these limiting factors or made it possible to alleviate their effects, creating a dynamic of both population increase within Lisu communities and opening a path to a new way to adapt to the dangers of life in Yunnan. Opium expanded the household portfolio for upland farmers by opening up new niches, both ecologically and economically. This facilitated and drove population increase and migration, which had specific consequences for Lisu social structure.

³⁰ To this day in northern Thailand, the Lisu are held up as an example of a relatively healthy population because of their practice of preserving vegetables in brine, which allows them to eat a more balanced diet in the hot, dry season when no greens are otherwise available.

Ecological and demographic consequences also resulted from the introduction of American crops such as maize and potatoes (Frank 1998). However, most American food plants arrived in the southwest of China as early as the mid-sixteenth century, before the Lisu migration I am discussing here. The sweet potato was introduced in the 1570s and spread quickly in China between 1700-1800, becoming the third most important source of food in the country after rice and wheat; maize, potatoes, peanuts, and tobacco brought about change in the early Qing Dynasty as well. There is some debate as to the demographic effects of these new crops. Mote, for instance, points out that techniques of increased food production (techniques of irrigation, early ripening rice) existed in Yunnan well before the rise in population in the eighteenth century (Mote 1999:903, 942), and Lee says that Chinese adopted these 'catch' crops only after population increased (Lee 1982b), in keeping with Boserup's thesis (Boserup 1965). However, the effects of these crops on upland populations were probably rather different. Corn and sweet potatoes, considered mountain food, actually increased the opportunity of poor Han settlers to colonize the mountains (Lee 1982b:298), to the disadvantage of the upland indigenes. From 1800 on, the Chinese expanded the mountain arable land and replaced traditional low-yield upland crops such as barley, oats, and buckwheat, with higher-yielding New World crops such as sweet potato, white potato, and maize (Lee 1982b:296-298; Lee 1982:740-1; Kang Yunhai 1993; Daniels 1994; Mote 1999:705-715).

Opium Cultivation in Northern Burma

The introduction of opium as a cash crop occurred in the early 1800s. Some sources state that opium was planted in the sixteenth century and after the Ming Dynasty by upland peoples of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia; if so, it was a known and familiar crop. Consequent upon the decriminalization of the opium trade after the Opium Wars, opium was far less profitable for smugglers. But even earlier, by 1820, opium production for the markets occurred particularly in Yunnan and Sichuan, in the parts of these provinces largely independent

of the authority of the central government of China. The nascent opium production system in western Yunnan and northeastern Burma expanded rapidly and dramatically as the quality and quantity of domestic opium increased rapidly throughout the nineteenth century (Anderson 1871:93, 124, 133-4, 221, 183-4; Anderson 1993:116; Baber 1882:4, 44-45, 71-72, 79, 87, 166, 171, 174, 183-184; Bello 2005; Booth 1996:147-148, 158-160, 183-184; Davies 1909:147; Hall 1974:2-4, 8, 17; Hill 2001:137-39; Kingdon-Ward 1986:61; Meyer and Parssinen 1998:2, 40, 45-47; Trocki 1999:21, 96, 119-121, 123-126, 128-129, 132-133, 142, 171; W. Walker 1991:5, 14-15; 23, 26, 30-35, 48; Wang 1996:231). Opium was suitable to the region, politically, economically, and ecologically. Within a decade of legalization, one British explorer in western Yunnan commented that as far as he saw, opium was the sole agricultural export for the people of the far west of Sichuan and Yunnan. He wrote:

...wherever cultivation existed we found numerous fields of poppy. Even the sandy banks were often planted with it down to the water's edge; but it was not until we began our land journey in Yunnan that we fairly realised the enormous extent of its production (Baber 1882:183).

He continued:

We walked some hundreds of miles through poppies; we breakfasted among poppies; we shot wild ducks in the poppies. Even wretched little hovels in the mountains were generally attended by a poppy patch (Baber 1882:184).

One of the 'natural curiosities' in this region were the opium ducks, wild ducks that fed on the poppy plants and so were languid and soporific from the narcotic (*ibid.*).

Burma was as ecologically well-suited to opium growing as was southwestern Yunnan. In fact, this geographical region – Northern Mainland Southeast Asia – had shared common ecological traits, cultural and linguistic similarities, and mutual trade for centuries. It is therefore more than likely that people in Burma learned to plant opium as quickly as those in western Yunnan. Opium from Yunnan had been traded to Burma since the early nineteenth century. It would be more surprising if opium cultivation had stopped at the shifting, porous border between "Burma" and "Yunnan." Opium was cultivated in western Yunnan in an area later claimed as

Burma as early as the 1820s (Anderson 1871:70-71). In 1837, McLeod noted that uplanders in Burma cultivated poppies (1869:70, cited in Hanks and Hanks 2001:54). Opium was again noted as far west as the Shan valleys and Kachin hills by 1868 (Anderson 1871:70-71). When the British incorporated Upper Burma in 1868, opium was being grown throughout the Shan States (McCoy 1972:70). In the 1870s, in an area of western Yunnan later disputed as Burmese territory, opium was cultivated (Colquhoun 1885:(1) 357; (2) 89). By the early 1890s, the opium poppy was being cultivated throughout northern Burma, usually on upland slopes in parcels ranging from small garden plots to hundreds of acres of hillsides covered in the white, single stem poppies. Opium was grown by the Chinese and by groups such as the Lahu, Akha, Palaung, Lisu and some Kachin, always above 4000 feet. As of 1891, Bhâmo Kachins all grew opium wherever the soil would support it for sale to the laborers at the Jade Mines. It was rare for lowland peoples to grow opium except where market conditions were very good or where ecological conditions were very bad (Anderson 1871:266; Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(2) 358-359; Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(1) 44, 51, 243).

Opium especially dominated agriculture and trade in Kokang, a Chinese-Shan state Burma east of the Salween River. In 1892, it was estimated that 1000 acres were planted to poppy and that it comprised two-thirds of cultivation in Kokang and the Wa States, with modest amounts of rice for household consumption or corn for liquor. It was planted by the Chinese and Chinese-Shan in the valleys, the Palaung on the middle slopes, and the Lisu on the mountain tops (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(2) 360; !Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(1) 464-65).

Whole stretches of hillside are covered with the poppy and the total area cannot be very far short of ten thousand acres. The average return per acre is a viss and a third, so that the amount of crude opium produced annually must reach something like forty thousand pounds. ... It is gathered in the usual way by slitting the poppy head... The labour spent in cultivating the fields is enormous. Some of these [fields] are several miles from the villages, often several thousand feet above or below them (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(1) 466).

Opium is the chief crop in Kokang and the Wa States to this day (Renard 2003). Little else would grow there or was tradeable. After the Kokang and Wa States ended poppy

production two years ago, the United Nations had to mount an emergency food program in the area, which continues today with the help of a few international aid agencies (Jagan 2005).

Opium was a crop suited to risky environments, allowing people to live where they had little else on which to depend.

Small plantings of opium were cultivated for trade as well as personal consumption, along with a number of other crops and produce. Anderson provides the most detailed description I was able to find on an early upland agricultural system with opium. The 'Kakhyen' hills (Hotha Valley) were within 30-35 miles of the Chinese border, a border that was closer before the Panthay Rebellions loosened Chinese imperial control over parts of what is now Burma. Crops were planted in different niches.³¹ The rich black loam in the mountain valleys was devoted to rice; the poorer soils of the red spurs of the mountain ridges were used for a miscellany of cash crops such as tobacco and vegetables, among them, apparently, opium. The staple crops of the valley, where Shan people lived, were rice, tobacco, and a little opium. The poorer upland soils were cultivated primarily by the Kachin and Lisu on the neighboring hills, and they cultivated maize as well as upland rice, tobacco, vegetables, and opium (Anderson 1871:83, 136). The poppy seed was planted in November, sprouted in January, flowered in February, and the sap collected in March or April (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(2) 359). In the Momien Valley (which was referred to by Anderson as Western Yunnan), upland farmers grew potatoes as well as a range of other vegetables, fruits, and nuts, much of which was sold, "... but opium is extensively grown all over the province, and sells in the bazaar at Rs. 10 to Rs. 12 for 3½ lbs." (1871:93). At Bhâmo, Kachin took crops, silver, and animals to valley markets to sell to the Shan, and among their produce was opium (Anderson 1871:221).

³¹ While it might appear that maize, potatoes, and other crops introduced from the New World can be expected to have the demographic consequences discussed here, these crops were introduced much earlier than opium without resulting in this rapid southward migration. Opium better fits the time line of Lisu migration.

The Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States provides information on Lisu cultivation of opium by the 1890s. I present this information by district, from north to south. In the Myitkyina District, on the border of the Kachin States, Lisu lived interspersed with Kachin villages. Some opium was grown in two villages and grown extensively in another, out of six Lisu villages reported (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(2) 296, 518, 718; II(3) 119, 130, 194). Thus, opium was not a central part of their agricultural strategy. In North Hsen Wi (Kokang), there were only 250 Lisu and the population was primarily Chinese and Kachin who grew a lot of opium that was exported to the Shans on the west and China on the east (1983 II:(1) 94). In South Hsen Wi, there were again very few Lisu interspersed among the Chinese, Burmese, Shan, Wa, La and Lahu in 1897 (1983 II:(1)201), most having moved in during the previous nine years following depopulation of the area due to warfare (1983 II:(2)205). The Lahu, however, extensively cultivated opium and systematically hunted (1983 II:(1)153). In Kokang, all of the Lisu villages grew opium, although whether it was the dominant crop or a catch crop varied (1983 II:(1) 195, 209, 458, 467; (2) 50; (3) 215).

Another place in which opium was grown was Mang Lôn (or Long) West, a Northern Shan State (1983 II:(2) 206). Mang Lôn was just south of Kokang. There had been a lot of population movement here due to the “disturbances” prior to annexation in 1885-1886 (1983 II:(1)202). This was a “wretchedly poor” area (1983 II:(2)72-73). The Lisu population, totaling five different villages or village groups, were clustered around a high mountain and connected ridge paralleling the Salween called Loi Lan. Other Lisu villages were found on the other dominating ridges, Loi Sa or Loi Se (1983 II:(2) 72-3, 167-9, 588-9, 590, 611, 743). Some of these Lisu had been settled in the area for “a long time,” having come from South Hsen Wi (1983 II:(2) 588-9, 611, 743). In the southern part of Mang Lôn known as Kawn Taü, some Lisu lived lower down on the mountains, having settled here “a long time ago” as well (1983 II:(2)168). Almost all the Lisu in Mang Lôn grew huge quantities of opium and a little corn for feeding pigs and making liquor. Some grew hill rice, but not many. The colonial report stated that, in general, “They grow opium or rice as they

perceive the demand” (1983 II:(1) 202). The markets were chiefly devoted to the bartering of opium for necessities such as rice and salt (1983 II:(2) 169).

Kengtung, a lively regional trade center in the Southern Shan States, adjacent to northern Thai kingdoms of Fang and Chiang Mai, had an ethnically diverse population, but far more Lahu and Akha than Lisu. Again, warfare had emptied the territory of population in 1886 (1983 II:(1) 443-4, (2) 365-6). The production of opium in Kengtung had “always been considerable.” For many years, large quantities of opium were exported to northern Thailand and Upper Laos, but when the French took over Upper Laos and made opium a government monopoly in 1896, prices fell greatly (1983 II:(1) 414), although apparently cultivation did not decrease. The Kingdom of Siam also had established a royal monopoly on opium in 1852, but because their prices were high, steady stream of cheaper Burmese and Yunnan opium was transported into northern Thailand and the royal monopoly’s prices were determined by that of smuggled opium (McCoy 1972:64, 67). Opium was primarily carried by Kengtung traders on foot and some by Chinese caravans (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(1) 423).

The Lisu, although not prominent here, were noted for growing a lot of opium and for being “very Chinese.” They celebrated Chinese New Year and intermarried with Chinese (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)588). The Lisu lived in the north and northwest of Kengtung and in the hills to the south of Möng Hsat (Müang Sat) (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(1) 420, (2) 366), in the hills north of Nam Lwe, south of the Kengtung Valley, in Möng Tum at the headwaters of the Mae Sai (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(2) 486), and in other southern districts of Kengtung (II:(1) 422), therefore on the northwestern border of Thailand. They “always” settled in the higher parts of the mountains of Kengtung and “invariably [grew] opium as their main crop” (I:(1):588; II:(1)422). This information dates from the mid-1890s. All of this population has since moved to Thailand (Bradley, p.c., February 2005).

In Möng Sit in the Eastern Division of the Southern Shan States, there was a very small population of Lisu, about 40 out of 8,613 people. There was a “recently settled” village of Lisu as

of 1898, but Scott and Hardiman also state that the Lisu had been growing poppy since 1896 (II:(2)480). Finally, in Wan Yin (Banyin), Eastern Division of the Southern Shan States, there were about 66 Lisu. They lived near the peak of Loi Maw, the highest peak in the district (II:(3)342). The poppy cultivated by the Lisu was “still in the experimental stage” (II:(3)343); yet they state earlier that Loi Maw was the only place west of the Salween in Wan Yin where opium was systematically grown for profit (I:(2)360). The Chinese planted it for profit, and uplanders such as the Kachin, Palaung, Lahu, Akha, and Lisu planted plots from the size of a pig-stye to that of “the ordinary country church yard” for their own use or sale in the neighborhood (I:(2)361). These are now a large Lisu cluster, not far from Taungyi (Bradley, p.c., February 2005). Opium cultivation was the norm by the early twentieth century among the Lisu in southwest Yunnan and northern Burma; “Poppy cultivation is well-nigh universal among the Lisu – at least in districts where its growth is permitted” (Fraser 1922:v). The lu Mien (Yao) and Hmong (Meo) were also recorded growing opium as a significant part of their agricultural system by 1913 (Jonsson 1996b:159-160). Opium had become a standard subsistence strategy in Burma, and the Lisu who migrated to the far north of Thailand by 1896 grew opium (Hanks and Hanks 2001:78).

These reports show that Lisu living further northwest grew little if any opium. This may have been for ecological reasons (too cold? too short a growing season?) or because there was no economic need for such a crop, for instance, if involvement in trade fulfilled needs for supplementary income. For example, Lisu traders transported lead that they dug in the Chinese state of Sansi to Burma on a trade route through Myitkyina; the lead was sold for salt (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(3) 207). If these are Black Lisu from the adjacent Black Lisu areas of Yunnan, their economic repertoire probably included hunting, banditry, and working as mercenaries. In fact, the use of the enormous crossbow typical of Black Lisu is mentioned only for these northern populations in Burma. Southwards, there was cash cropping, but not always of opium; in the case of the Lisu around Bernardmyo (also towards the north), they grew potatoes for sale to the British cantonment. As we move further south, opium becomes a more central part of Lisu adaptive

strategy. A higher percentage of Lisu planted opium; planted it on a larger scale; and planted it to the exclusion both of other cash crops and subsistence crops. There is far less mention, as well, of alternative economic strategies such as hunting (which can be very profitable in trade of animal parts for traditional medicines), trading, mining, soldiering, or of other cash crops. Opium had come to dominate this local economy. In that, it sounds similar to the situation in China, but it is not. In this case, these were mountain peasants who controlled their land; chose what to grow; and when, where, and how to sell it, at least within the structure of the existing markets and political conditions. It was smallholder cultivation, and often merely for local use with the excess sometimes sold in the nearest market.³²

Clearly trade was an element in opium production in Burma. In the southeast of the Shan States, especially in Kokang, opium was cultivated specifically for the long distance trade to Thailand, Laos, and Yunnan, even when that trade was made illegal by the monopolies in Thailand and Laos. Yunnan and Burma were source of cheaper opium for addicts in Thailand and Indochina. Chinese opium was imported into Burma in large quantities for many years until after World War II (Anderson 1871:266; Hertz 1912:102; Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(2) 360; Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(1) 4, 120, 263, 466, (2) 565-566, 568, 578; Stevenson 1981:36). Nevertheless, in 1892 almost all of the opium grown in Kokang and the Wa States went to China

³² In contrast, the social dangers of opium cultivation are related to a number of factors. These were: the extent of cultivation throughout the region and whether that significantly reduced grain cultivation; whether opium cultivation took place on lands suitable for food crops or simply opened up a new niche; the political environment, that is, whether warlords or local elites were monopolizing opium production or distribution; economic dependency and extraction; whether there were plantations in which capitalists or warlords monopolized production or small scale producers making their own agricultural decisions; whether rulers used the profits of opium to buy guns to enable them to carry out warfare; the degree of control of the central government and whether it had banned opium or not, as interdiction often increased the value of the crop, especially to those just outside of the reach of the entity that banned it and greatly increased the value to traffickers; and the frequency with which laws and implementation changed, leaving peasants susceptible to confiscation of the crop, incarceration, or execution. As Tullis has pointed out: "Most of the benefits and liabilities associated with production and trade of illegal drugs ultimately derive from illegality itself ..." (1995:138; see also Alai 2002; Booth 1996:148, 159-160; Hall 1974:4, 7-8, 17, 26-27; Hill 2001:138-9; Meyer and Parssinen 1998:40; Rock 1947:417n; W. Walker 1991:5, 15, 23-24, 34, 45; Trocki 1999:123-126, 132-133; Tullis 1995:99; Kemp 1921 quoted in Booth 1996:160).

(Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(2) 360) and by 1901, much Burmese opium went east to Thailand and Laos, but also west to local Upper Burma markets and sometimes into Yunnan (McCoy 1972:64). Opium control campaigns had contradictory effects on farm-gate prices. When the French took over Upper Laos and made the opium trade a government monopoly in 1896, export of opium from Kengtung decreased greatly and prices fell (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(1) 414). On the other hand, a campaign to suppress opium cultivation in Yunnan starting in 1937 stimulated a dramatic rise in the price of opium and the smuggling of opium from Burma into China two years later (Maule 2002). This was a complex regional market. Levels and end places of trade varied depending on market demands and prices, the distribution networks (numbers and routes of pedlars or caravans), and the politics of drug control, especially in China where policy was inconsistent. Levels of production varied with these market conditions as well as with growing conditions in micro-regions – depending on slope, exposure to sun, amount of rain and other meteorological conditions. Upland farmers appear to have responded to all of these conditions. They grew opium where there was a market for it, as in Kokang, Hsen Wi, and Kengtung. They grew less where there was less demand, as in Myitkyina, or grew different cash crops, as in Bernardmyo where they grew potatoes. Upland farmers evaluated their needs and planted a mix of crops accordingly. This was also typical of Lisu in northern Thailand in the 1970s, although their economic repertoire was a narrower one of corn, rice, and opium.

Poppy, while it grows well on degraded soils and can support populations in areas that would otherwise barely support a population, is not a risk-free crop. Its harvest is very labor intensive and can be undertaken only where there is sufficient labor for that one time of year, said to be March or April in Upper Burma. The seasons in Upper Burma were irregular and rainfall capricious. The poppy was susceptible to damage by wind, hail, or unseasonable rain, or even insect damage. Thus, production levels were irregular from season to season, from field to field, and from neighbor to neighbor: “one farmer’s crop may fail and the other’s make him wealthy” (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(2) 337, 359). Therefore, farmers had to balance their risks as well

as plant particular crops based on their perceptions of the markets. They were, in short, upland peasants tied into large regional markets affected by global political conditions.

Colonial authorities in Burma were deeply concerned about the uplanders growing opium as they feared it would cut into their monopolies; so, too, with the Royal Thai government. The Daily News (London) of May 21, 1886, noted the opium trafficking problem in Upper Burma and the government's plan to suppress that trade (Daily News (London) 1886). The "hill tribes" were blamed for importing opium from Yunnan (Hertz 1912:102), although I can think of no reason why they would have been more deeply involved in the trade than Muslim and Yunnanese Chinese traders. Ultimately, this was related to government concerns to control the potential flood of cheap Yunnanese opium into Burma, Thailand, and Indochina, thus undercutting their monopolies. There were two particular problems noted by British Burmese officials. These were that local upland production would make smuggling worse because it would have been too difficult to distinguish between smuggled Yunnanese and that "legitimately" grown by their own "hill tribes." The other problem was that they feared these upland minority peoples would divert their opium to smuggling rather than sell it legitimately to government monopolies (McCoy 1972:66; Tagliacozzo 2004). Accordingly, opium control issues arose with the integration and securing of the colonial state in Burma and with the creation of the nation-state in Thailand.

In the 1920s, the British authorities attempted to commence a systematic campaign to control opium production in northern Burma, but opium cultivation was never fully eradicated by the British in the Shan States. They had granted internal autonomy to the Shan *sawbwas*, who gained an important part of their personal income from upland minority people's opium cultivation, which they sold to Thailand and Lower Burma. The authorities failed to find an adequate replacement crop, without which farmers would have been left destitute (Maule 2002; McCoy 1972:71-72). Opium cultivation could not be eliminated without bringing about rebellion of those on whom the British depended to rule on their behalf. Their attempts were hindered not only by the potential loss of revenue to themselves and the Shan *sawbwa*, but by the fact that their bans

were geographically piecemeal and they believed opium to be irreplaceable, so that ideas of alternative crops were uninspired (McCoy 1972:66; Renard 1996:36-38; Maule 2002). A former Federated Shan States Commissioner, John S. Calgue, described conditions in the late 1920s:

the real point about opium in the Wa States and Kokang ... is that opium ... is the only thing produced which will pay for transport to a market where it can be sold. To suppress opium in Kokang and the Wa States without replacing it by a crop relatively valuable to its bulk, so that it would pay for transport, would be to reduce the people to the level of mere subsistence on what they could produce for food and wear themselves or force them to migrate (Maule 1992:36 quoted in Renard 1996:37-38).

Major Butterfield, Superintendent, North Shan States, Lashio, wrote that:

the ... great increase of population that is going on and the failure hitherto to find a substitute for, or modification of, taungya [swidden] cultivation in the hills has made forest preservation the most vital necessity of these States, next to opium suppression (1920:77-81, quoted in Renard 1996:35).

Here is a beginning of the discourse about opium and upland ethnic minorities in the Golden Triangle³³, one that continued until the 1970s and continues even to some extent today in Thailand. Opium took a central role in upland agricultural and economic systems. It became the nexus of adaptation and survival in the uplands of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. Its existence and use enabled migration, egalitarian social relations, and a population increase, but also became the main way by which uplanders were defined as a problem to modern nation-states.

Burma was attractive in part because upland farmers could plant – or not plant – opium poppies as they desired. British authorities never succeeded in enforcing international drug regulations in northern Burma, particularly the Shan States (Maule 2002). The Shan States and, after it northern Thailand, were particularly attractive because they were familiar as places-in-between, as western Yunnan had been. Upper Burma was administered by indirect rule through

³³ The Golden Triangle is the opium-growing region of southwestern Yunnan, northern Burma, northern Thailand, and northwestern Laos. It is a modern term with its roots in western nations' drug policy. It first appeared in print in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in July 1971 in an interview with a United States Assistant Secretary of State (Lintner 2003).

local chiefs and princes, who played the role of political middlemen/cultural brokers, not unlike the Tibetan chiefs and Chinese *tusi* of western Yunnan. In Burma and, eventually, Thailand, most cultivators were upland ethnic minority people, very loosely tied into the politics and oppression of a state government. That this was primarily a cash crop, planted for regional sale rather than for local consumption, is made clear by the fact that there are no reports of addiction on anywhere as large a scale as in China. Few Lisu smoked opium, and those men who did never did so in excess; villages where opium was smoked had at most one regular smoker; and young men “played with” opium but did not become addicted (Anderson 1871:124, 133, 134; Fraser 1922:v; Rose and Brown 1911:265). Large scale production in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia did not start until after World War II, especially after the new Chinese government drove out the opium traffickers and KMT, who immediately went into business in northern Thailand and Burma (McCoy 1972:65; Trocki 1999:171; Tullis 1995:108). As carried out in Southeast Asia until then, opium provided a reliable, if small, income for upland farmers in Burma.

Opium in Lisu Migration

The Lisu moved south in large part due to opium. Opium increased carrying capacity of specific types of marginal lands at the same time that Han movement was decreasing the land available to Lisu and other tribal peoples. In contrast to the usual arguments “explaining” tribal migration that find causes in factors external to the dynamics of Lisu society, I postulate a specific mechanism related to particular historical conditions in which Lisu were active agents. I also explain questions left unanswered by previous explanations, such as why the population moved so far, so fast, at this particular time. The answer lies in opium.

Opium played a central and transformative role in a number of ways. It is a highly valuable cash crop. It can be grown on any type of poor and degraded soils, opening up new econiches for upland peoples on marginal lands who were being pushed into more marginal areas by Han immigrants, such as the Lisu. In fact, it allowed uplanders to live on lands that once could

support few people, increasing population density in heretofore barren lands. The consequences were profound. For instance, in 1891, J.G. Scott stated that “without its opium Ko Kang would be no better than the thinly inhabited and poverty stricken hills usually inhabited by the Kachins “ (in “Revenue Inspection Reports, Northern Shan States, Season 1891-2,” quoted in Maule 2002). The cash received or the barter value of opium allowed people to buy more grain than they would have been able to produce on thin soils with erratic weather conditions. It allowed people to buy essential goods that were only available through trade, such as salt. Opium is also bankable – unlike food crops, opium can be stored for a long period of time with little deterioration or loss to pests. The silver received for it was also bankable, usually in the form of silver jewelry worn by women and young men in courting rituals. This meant that farmers had a means to ride out the social and natural disasters endemic to western Yunnan and northern Burma: they had movable wealth, something other than their labor, the land they had worked, domestic animals, and crops. Thus, opium proved an eminently suitable crop for the peoples of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia.

In a world being changed by colonialism, opium allowed uplanders to survive by tying them into global markets. This reliance on regional and global markets in fact expanded carrying capacity beyond local limits; an econiche-specific cash crop, traded, gave people the resources to make barren lands habitable at a higher population level than otherwise possible. Dependence on trade was a long-standing survival strategy for Tibetan and Tibetanized peoples. British control of Burma changed the balance of power in this region and colonialism re-oriented overland trade toward western dominated sea ports. For instance, cotton had once been a significant cash crop in Yunnan and northern Burma, especially in the Shan States. The raw cotton was largely obtained from hill villages; in Kengtung, cotton was grown exclusively by the hill tribes. Shan, Tai, and uplands women wove their own material and sold the excess cotton to local markets and Shan caravans. But by the 1890s, villages on the main roads had begun to buy cotton goods, imported calico from Manchester, and cotton yarn, and these had overcome locally produced

products. The imported cloths and yarns were less durable, but brighter and finer in appearance, and it became a sign of status to wear these (Scott and Hardiman 1983 1:(2) 366, 466). Thus, the dislocation of trade patterns undercut local cash cropping. Fortunately, an alternative cash crop was available in opium; it replaced former cash crops, the utility of which had changed under new world colonial economic conditions. Opium fit into existing Lisu agroecosystems and trade networks; it was remarkably congruent with the specific problems and contradictions faced by Lisu at that time and place. Opium was at the core of an intersection of structures. It solved an intensification of historical contradictions – while, of course, creating new ones – and its introduction and acceptance were almost overdetermined.

Opium allowed Lisu populations to overcome the specific limiting factors – the consequences of natural disasters, warfare, social unrest, corrupt officials, loss of agricultural land to Chinese immigrants, irregular seasons and rainfall, poor lands, lack of salt – inherent in their political and natural environments. It allowed them to weather periods of scarcity because opium was such a consistently valuable, non-perishable cash crop that it gave them the means to survive even when their crops were destroyed, inadequate, or they were forced to move by political conflicts. It allowed them to save so that they had resources to draw on in times of need created by both the natural and social environments. The profits of opium allowed people to buy grain, in many years more grain than they would have been able to produce on the marginal lands on which they lived. It allowed them to avoid dependency on wealthy landlords, monasteries, chiefs, and *tusi*.

I believe that opium created some of the push towards migration in that it supported a population increase among the Lisu. It is impossible to conclusively prove this, but colonial and missionary sources claimed that Lisu were experiencing population increase. In DC Townsend's account of the Puyapa Rebellion in 1902, he stated that he feared that the Lisu were looking for land because the population of Lisu had increased greatly and had no room for expansion in Yunnan (Hertz 1912:73). Fraser wrote that he believed the Lisu were experiencing an increase in

population (Fraser 1922:vi). Butterfield wrote of a “great increase of population that is going on...” (1920:77-8 quoted in Renard 1996:35). British records of the time indicate an influx of Lisu, and their figures are grossly underestimated (Bradley, p.c., February 2005), so it appears that even more Lisu moved southwards into Burma than the British understood. What does this mean? It could refer to population pressure due to the loss of land under the demographic pressure of Han migration. However, the dates for those statements are much later than the demographic transformation of Yunnan in the early to mid-nineteenth century, and the Muslim Rebellions had resulted in immense loss of life and reduction of population (Anderson 1871; Baber 1882:182). Thus, this population pressure may indeed have been due in part to population increase among some Lisu. Why would this be? I answer this in part by analogy to processes underway among the Lisu of northern Thailand

Opium allowed accumulation of wealth. Increase in income and upward social mobility is a common socioeconomic effect of illegal drug production around the world (Tullis 1995:137, 142, 157, 167). This enabled status displays, a key element in the kind of tribal societies typical of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. Among the Lisu, there was no competitive feasting or specified graded status as was found among many other upland groups of Southeast Asia (Kirsch 1973). For Lisu, the most important means of status display was marriage and payment of bridewealth. When a family lacks wealth (particularly in the form of silver or local currencies), they delay the marriage of their sons; when they have wealth, their sons marry earlier. Because many families will face similar conditions, this means that daughters’ age at marriage would also increase with lack of resources. Thus, an influx of wealth into society resulted in earlier age at first marriage. Earlier marriage meant more opportunity for births. A more stable subsistence allowed more children to be raised to adulthood and in turn have children themselves. This would have resulted in a demographic increase, similar to that among the Tamang of Nepal when potatoes were introduced (Fricke 1994). Furthermore, an increase in the number of children who survived to adolescence would have increased a family’s labor force and their ability to increase

the size of fields and, potentially, wealth. It would also have meant more young adults going off in search of land when they established autonomous households, as was the practice among Lisu in northern Thailand. I believe that the introduction of opium served as a stimulus to migration through population increase among those populations of Lisu who grew it. The Lisu populations that grew opium, those in the southern reaches of their range in Yunnan (W. Walker 1991:33, Map 2, Opium cultivation in China, 1920), were those that migrated. They were also the most Sinicized.

The introduction of opium as a cash crop by the mid- to late nineteenth century was, in fact, apt and timely from the point of view of upland farmers. Faced with, first, the influx of Han (peaking in the early to mid-nineteenth century) and, then, changes in trade patterns after the Muslim Rebellions (1850s) and during the age of colonialism, migration became an increasingly likely response to loss of land and trade opportunities that had once allowed them to survive in a precarious social and physical environment. Political changes, unrest, and land alienation were particularly marked in southwestern Yunnan. That migration became a significant response, in addition to rebellion or assimilation, was made possible because of the introduction of a cash crop as lucrative and bankable as opium. Opium funded migration.

Migration can be an expensive process. The migrating people have to sell much of their household goods, move whatever they can on what pack animals they have or can hire, and somehow find food until they are able to plant and harvest new crops. The labor they put into developing land is lost. Grains are too heavy, bulky, and easily ruined by water to be transported in sufficient quantity to support a group. Even if earlier Lisu migrants followed patterns similar to Lisu in northern Thailand – where young men scouted out new territory and prepared it, to be followed by the rest of the family once fields were established – migration still presented economic risk and burden. For instance, there would have been insufficient labor to open more than a minimal amount of land. In addition, this pattern of establishing a new village would not work where migration occurred over long distances of weeks' travel. Opium, however, could be

transported; it could be converted to silver; both silver and opium could be sold to buy food and labor at the new location. It provided movable wealth. Thus, opium enabled migration over longer distances at a more rapid pace.

It also supported the egalitarian society typical of Lisu in northern Thailand in the mid-twentieth century. No one need be dependent on another. All a young couple had to do was open new land, plant opium, hire labor if necessary, harvest and sell. Independence and autonomy was within the reach of every household. Indeed, the picture of Lisu society in Burma is of a relatively egalitarian society in that households were largely independent from each other. Ritual was carried out on a household basis; there is no evidence that a single clan or household was in charge of or had privileged access to ancestor spirits for the community in a significantly powerful way. Thus there was less ideological basis for chiefdoms than among hierarchical Kachin (Rose and Brown 1911). Marriage was to some extent based on equal exchange of women over generations, and thus did not serve as a basis for hierarchical relations, either, although marriage feasting was an important venue for the display of status relations.³⁴ But status was ephemeral, probably linked to household demography. The so-called clans appear not to have been significant for social relations except insofar as marriage was forbidden among those of the same clan regardless of known kinship distance. Clans in fact appear to have been localized patrilineages, given the great variation among lineage names among different places (Fraser 1922; Rose and Brown 1911). Again, this supports a picture of egalitarian social relations based on individual households.

³⁴ Bridewealth for Lisu in the opium economy of northern Thailand was about equal or higher bridewealth being paid than in the previous generation. Lisu did not see themselves as having any ongoing debt toward wife-givers; there was no ritual in which the wife's fertility was guaranteed or granted by her brothers/patrilineage. Payment of bridewealth was a matter of the repute of the household or local patrilineage. This will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Summary

The variable and fluctuating nature of social forms in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia was a point of comment by researchers looking for rigid, reified categories even before Leach wrote about it. It is one of the highlights of many mainland Southeast Asian societies and, apparently, of western Yunnan upland societies. Early colonial observers took such transformations as evidence of pollution, contact, or racial inter-mixing; Chinese imperial observers as evidence of developing civilization or reversion to barbarism; Tibetans rulers in terms of being wild or tamed. Leach theorized it in terms of an inherent instability, oscillating between egalitarian and hierarchical societies (*gumlao/gumsa*), but again saw it as a matter of acculturation toward a more developed or sophisticated society, that of the Shan princes. Others such as Maran (1967), Friedman (1979), and Nugent (Nugent 1982) countered with discussions of the ways in which British colonial tribal policy and new economic relations created chiefs in society, rigidly separating groups according to what had previously been flexible sociopolitical forms. Looking at the historical material from western Yunnan expands the points to be considered, the poles of difference. It also expands the cultural influences to be considered; not only the model of Shan chiefdoms, but those of Naxi chiefdoms and Tibetan states; not only British but Chinese colonial policies and extension of administrative control. Based on the previous historical ethnographic information, I argue that we must consider the following elements: the short-term vs. the long-term nature of political relations; the role of debt and dependency; Sinification vs. non-assimilation or Tibetan influence; and control of natural resources. British colonial hegemony is, of course, significant, but it occurred as an overlay upon already existing tendencies and relationships.

Lisu society exhibited much of the inherent flexibility that characterizes upland societies in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. This allowed adaptive shifts in response to political economic conditions. Ironically, continuity arises out of this flexibility, because change had been an inherent part of the conditions in which these social structures had previously existed. Lisu showed a wide

range of political forms that are best understood as a construct of relations with neighbors and adaptation to insecure economic conditions.

Despite a long history of Chinese political and administrative interest in what is now the southwest of China, Chinese influence had been incorporated into existing political, cultural, and ritual frameworks. However, with the demographic transformation from the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century the composition and dynamics of Yunnan changed more deeply and broadly. With the influx of Han Chinese, not only into garrisons and large towns but also into more isolated rural areas, indigenous peoples were affected even more than they had been by the battles and conquests of the Chinese state in preceding centuries. In this, they increasingly carried forward the plans of the Chinese state. This influx opened up a space for the state. The consequences were significant for social dynamics. It appears that there was an increase in debt servitude, loss of land, and assimilation among indigenous peoples. It is at about this time that many of the indigenous peoples became ethnic minorities and some, in turn, migrated to the mountains or south.

Opium and migration removed Lisu from the multiple spheres of authority, of multiple taxes, tribute, and obligations imposed upon farmers. Debt, land alienation, and political ascendancy were linked. A creditor could make a large part of the population economically dependent and through these debt relations arose a relation of political dependency. As western Yunnan was increasingly incorporated into the Chinese empire, land was appropriated through debt relations. Chinese soldiers, merchants, and officials, Tibetan rulers and indigenous chiefs all used this process to alienate the production and labor of the local population, who progressively became sharecroppers or were forced to take refuge in out-of-the-way places. This also provided the institutional framework for the extension of slavery, an institution commented upon by almost all Western observers at the time.

The Panthay or Muslim Rebellions in the mid-nineteenth century resulted in enormous physical destruction, breakdown of institutions and had decimated the population of Yunnan. It

destroyed trade for decades following, in part because the main traders were the Muslim Yunnanese who had rebelled. This opened up the possibilities for British colonial trade and administration to fill the gap.

Clearly Lisu and other peoples had migrated and undergone ethnic transformation in the past, given their non-contiguous territorial distribution. Why did they migrate southwards at this time rather than elsewhere? One answer is deceptively simple: because they could. They had the contacts, knowledge, and experience to travel and find new places to live. British Burma offered a reasonably safe alternative place to live, and this switching of allegiances and locations certainly seems in keeping with pre-existing social and political forms and strategies. Finally, they had access to a new crop, opium, that set new internal population dynamics into motion and gave them the wealth to support the expenses of migration: opium.

CHAPTER 3

HOUSEHOLDS IN REVEALED RIVER VILLAGE

The 'classic' Lisu village described in the ethnographic literature was one in which the household was so primary, so fundamental, that other social forms such as the village and the lineage appeared to have no practical importance at all. The Lisu village appeared nearly anarchic. Twenty years later, the Lisu village of Revealed River presented very different social forms. Where Durrenberger and Dessaint observed the prominence of individual households as autonomous social and economic units with little coherent overarching social structure such as lineage or village, Revealed River and its neighbors exhibited significant patrilineage and village forms. How did this emerge?

Historical Lisu social structure had been variable, adapted to the range of political, economic, and environmental conditions in which each community lived. Lisu communities observed in the late 1960s and early 1970s were at the height of an agricultural economy rooted in opium. The Lisu had been noted for their marked individualism, competitiveness, and ideology of egalitarianism (Scott 1981; Dessaint 1972a; Durrenberger 1976b; Lewis and Lewis 1984; Hanks and Hanks 1987; Tribal Research Institute 1989). As the Lisu proverb said, "All men are of equal height at the knees" (Chaipigusit 1989:177). Households were autonomous, only minimally bound together by patrilineal and village structures. Each household made its own production and migration decisions largely independently of other households. Clusterings of households regularly cooperated in economic and ritual activities, supported each other in disputes. Dessaint termed these "allegiance groups" (Dessaint 1972a:148). They were formed by post-marital residence that was as likely to be uxorilocal as patrilocal (Durrenberger 1976b). Neither were villages significant social structures, as evidenced by the frequent fission of villages, segregation

of factions, rejection (or even assassination) of domineering headmen, and inter-personal competition in displays of wealth as displays of "honor," "potency," or "repute," that is, *myi³-do⁵* (Durrenberger 1983a; Lewis and Lewis 1984; Hutheesing 1990a; Hutheesing 1999). The critical factor was opium, which enabled an economic egalitarianism that was put in place and reinforced by Lisu ideological and social structure (Durrenberger 1976b; Durrenberger 1976c). Furthermore, a pivotal element was latitude to migrate to avoid disputes, feuds, or authoritarian headmen (Dessaint 1971a; Dessaint 1972a). Opium as a cash crop allowed each household to gain wealth relatively quickly, break ties of obligation, and move away.

By the 1990s, the opium economy was fading and the state had effectively implemented policy against swiddening. Household dynamics had been fundamentally altered by increasing resource scarcity. The household was still the primary social and economic unit. What had changed was its relationship to the patrilineage, allegiance groups, and the village. The essential difference was the end of opium as the main cash crop and land scarcity, with consequences for household wealth and autonomy; the key mechanisms in shifts in patrilineage and allegiance group relations were labor allocation and the formation of new households. Under these conditions, patrilineages as potential landholding units had risen and allegiance groups based on sororal or affinal ties had decreased in importance. At the same time, the village became more important in people's lives due particularly to the restriction of household migration under recent political economic conditions and the Thai state's emphasis on working through village level structures to control the population and land use. And yet, changes in economic and political conditions had not brought about some radical transformation in Lisu social structure. The elements of patrilineality and village as community were there 30 years ago, but unimportant in people's lived experience. The "prior texts" of village and patrilineage had been re-emphasized with the end of the opium economy. The Lisu household remained primary in part because it was a structure that was adaptable in its relations to the wider structure and so could remain structurally similar across a range of political and economic conditions. This chapter and the next

trace the form of these differences and relates them to both economic and political changes in the northern Thai highlands.

Revealed River Village

Village Statistics

Revealed River Village was predominantly Lisu, with some Yunnanese Chinese. It was a fairly large village of 38-41 households over the 2 year period of my fieldwork. Some Shan (Tai Yai) laborers lived in the village at times and there were some regular Lahu laborers, usually opium addicts who were not resident in the village. Other part-time residents were the "Mountain Teachers," Thai teachers hired in a specialized education program for ethnic minority children and adults, who lived an average of two weeks of every month in the village. Finally, Thai forestry officials visited the village about four times a week, often in the company of UN-financed Thai officers or government officials from Bangkok, and the Third Army Battalion made semi-regular visits to the village to check for illegal activity. A dirt road had been built ten years previously to facilitate government visits and legal trade out of the village. The primary form of subsistence was farming, although the nature of farming activities had changed greatly in the past ten to fifteen years. Revealed River was part of a cluster of seven predominantly Lisu villages (and one poor Lahu village on the fringes), the largest of which, Thirty Thousand, was the founding village.

In parameters of population and settlement location, Revealed River was similar to Lisu villages of 25 years previously. A survey of 60 villages in the late 1960s found an average of 25.8 household/village, with a range of 13-35 households/village. About 50% of Lisu villages had some Chinese present and 13% had Lahu present (Dessaint 1972b:202-203). Ban Lum, the site of Durrenberger's research, was located in the vicinity of four other Lisu villages and one Karen village; the Lisu villages ranged from five to upwards of eighty households (Durrenberger 1971:20). Sixty-three percent of Lisu villages were less than two hours' walk from another Lisu village. The majority of villages, 67%, were located so that markets were accessible but not too

close, that is, three to nine hours of travel time (Dessaint 1972b:202-203). Ban Lum was about a three hour walk from the small Thai town of Pa Pae (Durrenberger 1971:20). The big difference in the 1990s, of course, was that the pack pony caravans were gone; people traveled by private pickup, or even by a public Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son bus. More recent figures from a census taken of upland ethnic minorities in 20 northern provinces in 1997 showed an average village size of 35 households per village (Highland Economic and Social Development Promotion Office 2000).

Evil Peaks had been in existence 12-14 years when Dessaint did his fieldwork in 1968-1970, and it broke up near the end of his fieldwork (Dessaint 1972a:32). In 1970, only 13% of Lisu villages had been established for 20 years or longer, and even these had changing populations as residents moved in and out. It was more common for villages to be in existence for 5-10 years (30%) or 0-5 years (20%) (Dessaint 1972b:202-203). Revealed River had been in existence much longer than most Lisu villages at Dessaint's time with less turnover in personnel.

The Founding of the Village

The founding of Revealed River was traditional, if Lisu life in Thailand of the 1960s is taken as the benchmark of traditional Lisu life; it followed typical patterns of founding of villages at the time. Revealed River Village was named in Thai after a local creek. It was founded in the mid-1960s by Lisu settlers who had left Thirty Thousand Village due to arguments with other villagers there. Thirty Thousand had been an exceptionally large village of up to two hundred households. Its size was supported by exceptionally fertile opium fields; as I was frequently told, "the opium fields spread from horizon to horizon." As such, Thirty Thousand was a key village in the narcotics trade and was made a key village for anti-opium development projects. Shortly after Durrenberger completed his research, Thirty Thousand Village began to disintegrate following a

series of disputes between the founding and other lineages.³⁵ It had grown very rapidly to unmanageable proportions as word spread of the excellent opium production that could be achieved there; in fact, its disintegration was mentioned by Durrenberger as an example of a large village dwindling as fertility decreased (Durrenberger 1970b:14). Dessaint's survey of Lisu villages in northern Thailand showed that the rate of segmentation or fission of villages varied. In the first few years of founding a village, there would be a rapid population increase, followed by a gradual decline ending either in abandonment of the site or a lower but more stable population, although the specific members of the population changed (Dessaint 1972a:21). In a sense, the Thirty Thousand cluster reflected a freezing of fissioning tendencies some time in the 1980s. Within the cluster, Thirty Thousand was still the largest village, with well over 75 households in the mid-1990s; Spring Village the next; then Revealed River; followed by the four smaller, satellite villages I was told were somewhat younger and to which a few people migrated in the course of my research.

In recounting what they knew of the history of their area, Lisu villagers emphasized that it has been settled and cultivated for many decades – up to “100 years” – and that opium had “always” been the main crop in the area, bringing wealth and security to those who cultivated it. The Lisu founders had been preceded first by Hmong and then by Lahu, and to this day the upper

³⁵ Such disintegration is often assumed to have occurred following over-use of local resources as a decrease in available fertile land lead to feuds. Dessaint noted that some villages grew very quickly when first established but that this often resulted in great land pressure or disputes between factions of the village with rival headmen, with the usual outcome of emigration (Dessaint 1972b:199). However, Robert Cooper's study of resource scarcity among the Hmong indicated that village disintegration resulted from political competition and could not be correlated with land scarcity (Cooper 1984). Furthermore, Durrenberger noted that resource scarcity and competition rarely resulted in direct conflict (personal communication, 1975). I personally doubt that social dynamics and resource competition can be that clearly separated. However, ethnic differences have exacerbated such conflict of late. Starting in the 1990s, there has been increased conflict between lowland Thai farmers and upland ethnic minority farmers at places such as Chomthong and Doi Inthanon over scarce resources, in this case water and runoff from pesticide use. The lowland farmers have attempted to have the upland farmers banned and relocated from their farmlands (Lohmann 1999; Atthakor 2000; Bangkok Post 2000a; Bangkok Post 2000b; Ritchie 2000; Bangkok Post 2001a; Bangkok Post 2001b; Hongthong 2002; Samabuddhi 2002; Samabuddhi 2003). This conflict has occurred in the context of state intervention and problematization of uplanders as not-Thai and destructive to the state (Gilligly 2004).

part of the village was haunted by a Lahu ghost of a girl suicide. Dessaint noted that some Lisu preferred to settle areas pioneered by Lahu; Lahu had had a broader economic base, including hunting and variety of crops, while the Lisu tended to specialize in opium and dry rice (Dessaint 1972b:200). In recounting village history to me, the elders of Revealed River tended to focus on personal histories of migration and these indicated that older adults (45 or older) had lived in 10-15 different places over the course of their lifetime.

There were three main factions in Revealed River Village. The main organizing factors were kinship, affinal relations, and ethnicity. The three factions were two Lisu lineages and their allegiance groups, and the Yunnanese Chinese community. Additionally, a third Lisu group was tied to the two main lineages by marriage and other alliances, but loosely. These latter households were not cohesive enough to form a consistent faction and some appeared to have previously been associated with one of the other two Lisu factions. There was a slow attrition of these loosely affiliated households through the years of my research.

The founders of Revealed River, the Yipha lineage (a subset of the Biapha or 'Bee' lineage, said to be the one unadulterated Lisu clan (Hutheesing 1990a:158)), had come from near Fang, on Thailand's far northern border with Burma. The oldest member of the lineage remembered Burma but could not remember where in Burma he had lived. After living in Thirty Thousand for a year or two, they settled in Revealed River, the elderly lineage head said, due to lack of good land in Thirty Thousand. This lineage and its allegiance group lived in the upper part of the village, closest to the shrine of 'Old Grandfather,' ($a^3\text{-}pa^3\text{-}mo^5$) the village guardian spirit, and provided the *maw mong* or *mə mə*, servitor to that shrine; I never heard of this role going to anyone in the second lineage faction. Thus, there was an association between the senior shaman of the founding lineage and the servitor to the village guardian spirit. When one servitor migrated out of the village, there was very little jockeying for position; the head shaman of the next senior line in the Yipha lineage took over those duties, although this had to be confirmed by divination.

The second faction was composed mostly of people of the Laoyipha lineage and its allegiance group and lived in the lower part of the village. This lineage was said to be a “Lahu” lineage; only a few lineages were said to be “pure” Lisu, the others being “Chinese” or “Lahu” (Hutheesing, personal communication, 1993). They had entered some years after the first group. They, too, had lived in Thirty Thousand Village but left due to feuds; they settled in another village in the cluster and after conflicts in that second village, they settled in Revealed River Village. The head of this lineage at the time had been a wealthy, powerful, and notorious leader. On his death, his son became the headman.³⁶

The other significant faction in the village were the Chinese. About half of the Lisu villages in Thailand had Chinese residents (Dessaint 1972b:199). They were not related to each other except by marriage. Some had been intermarried with Lisu for two generations; in terms of actual ancestors, they were more Lisu than Chinese, but completely identified as Chinese in language, dress, ritual, and agricultural practices. Others of the Chinese were the descendants of the remnants of the Kuomintang armies that fled China after the Revolution. In recent years, the Chinese role as a separate faction had decreased. In the early 1990s, only two intact families still lived in the village year-round, aside from ‘households’ of itinerant laborers supported by one of the Chinese families. Several other Chinese families had used their superior access to capital and lineage ties to other Chinese to move down to Chiang Mai to pursue commercial interests and education for their children. Nevertheless, they maintained homes and returned at New Year, sponsoring *dam hua* rituals (Tai, a ritual of blessing by water which was also an occasion for feasting sponsored by the richest and most powerful village members). They were an important

³⁶ While it appears that the son had inherited his father’s position, the Thai officials in the village spoke of him as appropriate for the job because of his fluency in Thai and modern style. They had, in essence, appointed him. These traits, of course, were related to his father’s wealth and connections. Another factor, I believe, relates to an inherent duality in the political structure of this Lisu village, whereby one kin group controlled the ritual position of servitor of the Village Guardian Spirit shrine and the other dominated political positions and dealt with outside forces. Similar diarchic structure has been noted by for the Akha (Tooker 1996) and for Tibetan and partially-Tibetanized societies. Samuel describes this structure as an emphasis on horizontal linkages that avoided giving all power to a single individual (Samuel 1993:152).

cultural influence, as a legitimating cultural model, a point of comparison for talk about the economic failures of Lisu, and a negative example because many Chinese young men had become addicted to opium, something very rare among Lisu until recently. The leader of this faction had come to the area from further northeast some twenty years ago because he had heard about a project in the area at that time and wanted to take advantage of its help in starting an enterprise. His grandfather had entered Thailand as a trader in the Chiang Mai area and his mother had been Lisu. His wife was also the descendant of a Chinese trader and his Lisu wife.

The early to mid-1990s were a time of political and economic transformation. The opium was gone. Villagers depended on an ever-changing mix of replacement cash crops, hoping to find a set of crops that might replicate the wealth achievable with opium. They experienced insecurity, greater risk, and constant worry about the future – whether there would be sufficient land for their children and whether they would be allowed to maintain their village in territory that had been appropriated by the Thai state. They dealt with the constant interventions of Thai officials and Thai teachers; they traveled regularly to the lowlands in trucks in search of markets for their new crops; their children were away most of the year at lowland Thai schools as boarders but their children and young adults had been residents of this one village nearly their entire lives and could remember no other. The Lisu world in Thailand was greatly changed.

Change was taking place in village level relations and organization in Revealed River Village in adaptation to the changing economic base and growing contact with the Thai state. I will write here about how Lisu cultural principles supported both unstable villages and highly independent households, stable villages and cohesive kin organization, in this case localized patrilineages. Which sort of organization predominated depended on economic and political conditions. Current conditions supported stable villages due to Thai and Project policy toward villages, and strong localized lineages due to increasing resource scarcity. I will trace out the significant units of social organization in Revealed River Village.

Lisu Social Organization: The Household

The basic social unit for ritual, exchange, production, and social relations was the household (*hʹɿ⁴*). The household was enacted as the primary social unit through rituals to a single set of ancestors, joint production decisions and consumption, and the construction of social relations through avoidance taboos. The household was defined through practice, enacted through daily activities. This is a processual definition of the household (Netting, Wilk and Arnould 1984). Nevertheless, co-residence is an essential characteristic of the household; as Laslett points out, this characteristic is not simply epiphenomenal to marriage, kinship, and economics (Laslett 1983). In essence, households are significant because they are significant to the Lisu themselves; they see the household as the primary social unit. In this, we can accept their definition rather than working from theoretical assumptions (Yanagisako 1979). Nevertheless, there was no Lisu word for household separate from the family; people referred to the house, *hʹɿ⁴*, usually interchangeable with resident family, meaning those who regularly ate and slept in the house.

One of the key mechanisms of household structure was resource allocation through the idiom of kinship. The impact of changes in the political and economic context had altered production and consumption practice. Household relationships can be seen as the relations of production cloaked in a belief system of kinship that made them compelling, the social relationships of a particular mode of managing resources that was culturally and historically specific (Siskind 1978:869; Cooper 1983). It was not so much the division of labor by gender that was the basis of production and livelihood (Siskind 1978; Marburg 1984:10) as the household, and thus kinship – the idiom by which the household was culturally constructed – and marriage, by which new households were formed and alliances with other households produced. The Lisu of Revealed River Village also enacted their households through shared ritual and economic activity, which, for them, were part of the same universe (Durrenberger 1983b; Durrenberger 1989).

The Household as Demarcated by Ritual

Rituals were one of the ways that households and factions were demarcated. Religious practice among Lisu in northern Burma, for instance, was mostly a household affair (Rose and Brown 1911:266), and this held for Lisu of northern Thailand as well. The sociological units involved in the most common rituals demonstrate that most ceremonies were private household events, or occurred at most within the localized lineage. Blessings invoked at the ancestor altar for First Fruits or New Year, the opening of swidden fields, soul-calling, and disposal of evil spirits, all took place for the benefit of the household and its members. When a married couple moved out of their parents' house, they carried out these rituals themselves. In short, the household can be defined as a ritual unit with one set of lineage ancestors, and the household was considered to be the residence of these spirits (Durrenberger 1970a:17-18; Dessaint 1972a:25, 253). These rituals were performed in the household by a patrilineage member. New households set up their own ancestor shrine and carried out their rituals separately (Durrenberger 1970b:17-18; Dessaint 1972a:25).³⁷ Similarly, Mien households as be defined as ritual units with a single set of ancestors – although the actual composition of the household transmuted in different political economic conditions far more dramatically than was true for Lisu (Jonsson 1999, 2001a, 2001b). The household's role as the fundamental unit was also demonstrated in village ceremonies, village assessments, and village labor allocations (Dessaint 1972a:114).

Two rituals were carried out annually through which village structure was enacted. These were New Year and First Fruit. However, significant portions of the rituals were carried out within the household. For instance, the First Fruit ceremony was carried out by individual households, albeit by all of the households of the village at the same time. The entire household was blessed by the elder male of the house. This included prayers and the tying of strings around the wrists of

³⁷ Immigrating households presented a bottle of liquor to the headman to request permission to live in the village, participated in a village-wide sacrifice to the Village Guardian spirit, and built his house, with the village helping in the roof-raising. The household then sacrificed a pig and called the ancestors of the male household head to the house; they then held a feast to which everyone in the village was invited (Dessaint 1972a:31).

family members for blessing (*gheu*⁵-*swi*³). I was asked to perform this on occasion in order to convey my blessing, my wealth and success; they felt it was more effective if I spoke in English. The gist of such prayers were calls for wealth, for gold, silver, rice, cattle, pigs, chickens, for good health, for success in every endeavor, for fruitfulness and bounty, always expressed in couplets (“bring gold, bring silver”) (see Durrenberger 1989; Hutheesing 1990a for examples). Such blessing rituals were also carried out for the bride and groom in a wedding ceremony, in which all who contributed to the marital prestations blessed the new couple. On the other hand, the New Year ceremony required that everyone in the village participate in elements of the ceremony. Some New Year rituals were performed in and for the household; offerings to the Old Grandfather Spirit were made by each household at the village shrine on the same morning (with the date having been agreed to by the village elders under the advice of the servitor). Yet, each household made an offering to the *maw mong* (servitor to the Old Grandfather Spirit) and to the headman, and dances were performed in front of each household to bring it blessing for the coming year. The circle dancing at New Year celebrations also served a ritual purpose in extending blessing to each household. Girls, dressed in turbans and wearing the family silver, were loudly praised as their dress displayed the *myi*³-*do*⁵ of the girls’ families, the economic success of their families. Anyone’s absence was noted. In all of these community rituals, the orientation was toward household blessing.

In terms of everyday ritual, curing was the most common. Most Lisu curing took place exclusively and privately in the household, unlike the more public rituals for blessing. There were two levels of ritual curing. One was traditional medicine, mostly herbal, practiced by older women who passed it on to close female relatives, particularly daughters. Knowledge was localized and idiosyncratic to family groups. A woman rarely treated a person outside the lineage with which she lived (Hutheesing 1990a). Both women’s herbal medicine and ancestral/shamanistic ritual were oriented toward practical results (Durrenberger 1989:39), and any curing ritual was replaceable by use of technological (Western) medicine in the Thai health system.

Shamans, always men, dealt with illness believed to be caused by evil spirits or by soul loss (Durrenberger 1971; Durrenberger 1989). A shaman could be called in to diagnose and cure an illness at any time. Only the older lineage of the village, the Yipha lineage, ordered such curings with any frequency. In the lower half of the village, the Laoyipha shaman carried out curings and ceremonies for his own household, but he was not often called on by his relatives. Although I lived next to this lineage, I rarely heard the call of the shaman as he went into trance. It seemed that the Laoyipha, demographically younger and somewhat Thai-ized, rejected much of shamanism and in fact mocked their shaman. They made a point of buying household medical supplies when in town (aspirin, antibiotics, bandages, etc.).³⁸

Getting rid of an evil spirit was the most common household ritual performed. Any male head of household could perform the ceremony if he knew the proper spells and procedure. The point was to carry the evil spirit out of human habitation on old clothes from the household. Often an outsider, such as a Lahu laborer, was employed to carry the items to the border of the village; the upper path was littered with old clothes that had been abandoned as part of this ritual. The evil spirit was evidenced by someone's snappiness or general dissatisfaction, perhaps being argumentative. I saw this performed most often for teenagers, who were young adults in terms of Lisu work expectations but socially still children as unmarried. Expected to behave responsibly and obediently, their dissatisfaction with work or love or obedience seemed often to be interpreted as the presence of an evil spirit. The ritual was always household specific.

³⁸ In retrospect, I think that another dynamic was involved. People told me that this shaman was laughable because he was not a 'real' shaman. In reviewing Durrenberger's work on shamanism and curing, I suspect that in fact the problem was that he did not have lineage spirits to possess him as the junior lineage spirit had to be three generations back. The Laoyipha lineage was a "Lahu" lineage, meaning that the founding male was a Lahu married to a Lisu woman who created a Lisu lineage, established by the shaman's grandfather. Durrenberger recounts that these shallow lineages could not have shamans; but in one case where the evidence that a man was being possessed was irrefutable, his lineage depth was recalculated upward to make his FF his FFF, thus granting him a junior lineage spirit. See later discussion on shamans and lineage spirits in Chapter 5.

A soul-calling ceremony was a more serious affair and the associated rituals more elaborate and expensive. This also depended on the service of the shaman of the patrilineage. The ceremony was usually carried out in conjunction with New Year or other annual festivals where there was an opportunity for status display. People resorted to this only after a long or troublesome illness that could not be attributed to physical reasons. In the context of the hierarchy of resort in a 1990s Lisu village, soul-calling was used to counteract what we might think of as emotional or psychological problems, or intractable, chronic illness. Again, I saw these mostly performed on behalf of teenage or young adult children. In one memorable case, however, it was carried out for a new bride who was dissatisfied with her groom. It did not help; she left him shortly thereafter. The abandoned groom's father, the Laoyipha shaman, then carried out another soul calling for his son. The son was embarrassed and claimed that his illness was merely malaria from sleeping in the garden hut and working too hard. But this ceremony appeared to have been successful, by the shaman's account, as the young man's mood lifted shortly thereafter; on the other hand, it may have been related to his parents finally arranging a successful marriage for him.

Aside from this, a group shamanistic ritual took place on the first night of New Year to rectify problems before the beginning of the New Year. These ceremonies were attended by patrilineal kin and resident affines, but sometimes a visitor, kin to one of the in-marrying women of the lineage, attended as well. In the course of the ceremony, the entranced shaman walked among the crowd and selected certain people to diagnose and bless. Most of participants were married women with children; they laughed at me, a single woman, for attending. When it was over and the shaman awoke from his trance, he would ask what had occurred and the whole group would discuss what the spirits had made known to them. A senior male lineage member was often key in interpreting the performance. In this sense, diagnosis and treatment were community affairs revolving around the patrilineage.

Rituals oriented toward swiddening had the purpose of asking for or ensuring productivity for the household and its members. Such ceremonies might be presided over by a shaman, but any knowledgeable male family member could perform them. These once included the offerings to the forest spirit at the opening of a field, but this ritual was quite rare in Revealed River, as new fields were not often opened anymore. Durrenberger says this was a village ritual (Durrenberger 1989), but if it did occur in Revealed River in the early 1990s, it was kept secret because no one wanted to mark the opening of forest lest the Project find out.

The social units involved show that most rituals were oriented toward the productivity of the household, sometimes extending out to the lineage in the case of New Year shamanistic rituals. Blessings invoked at the ancestor altar at First Fruits, in the dancing in front of each house at New Year, opening of the swidden fields, soul-calling, and disposal of the evil spirit – all took place for the benefit of the household. When a married couple moved out of the parents' house, they then carried out these rituals themselves. That is, shamanistic and ancestral rituals were markers of significant social units, in this case household or local lineage.

The object of the ritual was household level productivity. Anything with productive capacity, including a political unit, had a spirit; each political domain, each econiche, had a spirit (Durrenberger 1989:30). Ritual emphasis was a matter of practice, so that the ritual focus had the potential to shift from one domain to another.³⁹ The dynamics of ritual were different between egalitarian and chiefly societies. For instance, in northern Burma ritual was under the jurisdiction of each household and Lisu households made offerings only to more recently dead, rather than distant clan ancestors. This was evidence of their egalitarian social organization in comparison to groups such as the *gumsa* Kachin in which the chief's rule was ideologically validated by his

³⁹ And, in fact, I argue elsewhere that the New Year ritual in Revealed River has more recently been elaborated as a ritual for the blessing of the village as a whole. Such elaboration was not typical of villages in Chiang Rai (Hutheesing), nor did Dessaint or Durrenberger note this role (Gilligly 2000), but was in keeping with practices in Tibetan and Tibetanized agricultural societies where rituals were performed on behalf of the village comprising an annual cycle of ritual devoted to local spirits and to ensure the prosperity of village fields (Samuel 1993:130).

privileged access to a lineage of founding ancestors (Rose and Brown 1911:266-267). An example of transformation within one community is found among the Mien of Phulangka (Chiang Rai). In the twentieth century, relationships with the spirits were revised from hierarchically oriented rituals towards relations with spirits largely revolving around household prosperity, correlating with changes in the political economy (Jonsson 2001a:636).

Household Structure and Composition Under the Opium Economy

The household was not only marked ritually, it was also the basic economic unit for production and consumption, domains that were mutually reinforcing for the Lisu (Durrenberger 1983b; Durrenberger 1989). The household was the locus of production decisions, labor allocation, and distribution of resources. In this sense, it was the gateway for the relationship between the people and their physical environment and economy. As the agricultural economy was transformed from one in which opium was the economic mainstay to one in which a range of crops had to be planted, tested, and marketed, and as the social environment to which people had to adapt shifted to incorporation into the Thai state, the household was the front line of adaptation. Resources are made use of through human labor; in Revealed River, the household was the means by which labor was organized; and over time, the household had become the unit by which land was held. All of this was shaped within the frame of household repute, the expression of household autonomy through production.

At the time that Durrenberger and Dessaint carried out their respective research (Durrenberger from February 1969 to July 1970; Dessaint from August 1968 to August 1970), opium was the mainstay of farming for Lisu and many other high mountain ethnic minority peoples such as the Hmong and Mien. Their studies described the Lisu household before the collapse of the opium economy. This is key for understanding Lisu social structure and its transformations. Hutheesing's work was based on research starting in 1982 in See the Tiger Village in Chiang Rai and examined cultural and social transformations during a time in which the opium economy was

disintegrating, with the result of waning “repute” of men and women unable to fulfill their culturally-constructed roles (Hutheesing 1990a:5).

Lisu social structure was based on independent household units of nuclear or stem families. The household was the unit of labor recruitment; production and consumption occurred within the household. Each household had its own fields, claimed by labor rather than ownership of the land itself. The household was the locus for decision-making about production and allocation of resources and labor. The senior male head of the household managed the household and set daily work tasks, according to 83% of married women in See the Tiger Village, although the women were emphatic that they did not always obey (Hutheesing 1990a:155). What this meant in practice is that people in one household worked fields they opened each year together under the direction of the head of the household. Labor exchange occurred between households in the neighborhood, that is, with the allegiance group (which I will discuss later) and labor was hired from other ethnic groups (Durrenberger 1970b:17; Dessaint 1972a:126; Dessaint and Dessaint 1992:163, 173).

In Ban Lum and its neighbor villages, the average household size was about 6 residents/household (Durrenberger 1971:16). The size of the household rarely exceeded five times the number of its productive members. Each household consisted of only a small number of workers, 2.3 workers/household, out of 5.9 members/household (Dessaint and Dessaint 1992:163, 173). Hutheesing noted an average of 5.2 people/household (Hutheesing 1990a:11). Population figures collected by the Tribal Research Centre from the late 1960s and early 1970s showed the Lisu with an average of 6.33 people/household. For upland ethnic minority peoples as a whole, the size of households ranged from a high of 7.98 and 7.41 for Hmong and Mien (opium growers), respectively, to a low of 5.66 and 5.18 persons per household among Lua and Karen, indigenous people who practiced a subsistence-oriented agriculture of mixed swiddening and paddy growing along with forest conservation. Among different ethnic groups, heavier dependence on cash cropping was associated with larger households (Kunstadter 1983:16, 19).

Household size had been considerably reduced in the post-opium economy for most of these groups, but those who were opium growers still tended to have slightly higher household size than non-opium growers (see Highland Economic and Social Development Promotion Office 2000).

Fundamentally, Lisu households were composed of a husband, wife and their children. The male head of household was the *h'iya*⁴-*si*³-*pha*⁵ and the female head of household (his wife) the *h'iya*⁴-*si*³-*ma*³. A married son and his wife might live with his parents or a married daughter with her husband live with her parents, depending on the conditions of marriage exchange negotiated, and uxrilocality was more common than patrilocality. Some households included an elderly parent who was usually the widow of the household head, but sometimes the father who had abdicated his position as household head. It was also common for unmarried younger siblings, nieces, or nephews of the husband or wife to live with them if their parents had died (Durrenberger 1971:17-18; Dessaint and Dessaint 1992:163). The predominant household form in Evil Peaks was the nuclear household, which was 64% (27) of households; 23% (10) of households included some relatives of the husband (19%), the wife (2%), or both (2%); three households were composed of patrilineal extended families (7%); and one household was composed of two widowed sisters and the children of one (Dessaint 1972a:108). That is, the Lisu household cycled between a stem household with parents, unmarried children, and one married child and spouse and grandchildren; to a nuclear household with only one married couple and their children; and back to a stem household when the children achieved the age of marriage (i.e., stem → nuclear → stem). In this way, the household permutations had continuity in a regularized way (Fortes 1958). The demographic/developmental cycle of the Lisu household was the key constraint in levels of productivity per household.

The household was the unit of consumption. Rice was consumed by the members of the household that had produced it (Durrenberger 1976c:636). Most income from the fields, including cash from the sale of opium, belonged to the household; any member had a claim on that money. Nevertheless, husbands and wives could own cash and other items separately and bring legal

cases against each other, as could fathers and sons (Durrenberger 1970b:17-18; Dessaint 1972a:108). Similarly, the household was the basic unit for hospitality and reciprocity; households kept track of visiting so that return hospitality would be equal to that received. Most importantly, the head of the household was responsible for reciprocating any feasts that had been attended by members of his household, in order to maintain his individual and his household's reputation (Durrenberger 1976c:637). The male head stood for the household publicly.

The household was also defined in part by space. There were male and female spaces within the household. The area of the ancestral shrine, opposite the main doorway, was a male space (Durrenberger 1971:17-19). The woman married to the senior man of the household slept in the male wing. The private room of the married couple who headed the household was, therefore, located between the kitchen and the ancestor shrines, adjoining the public space where guests were hosted. The female-oriented space was to the right of the altar from the door (Hutheesing 1990a:69). Women, restricted from visiting throughout the village by standards of shyness and shame, tended to congregate against the wall of the house or on a platform immediately outside of the house, where they could work and watch people coming in and out of the village (Hutheesing 1990a:71).

Lisu society was markedly egalitarian. To Durrenberger, there appeared a low degree of gender-based division of labor and an extension of egalitarianism into the household (Durrenberger 1970b:16). Dessaint noted more of a division of labor in that men cleared and burned fields while women tended to weed and harvest. He stated that these complementary chores made marriage a necessity, which he believed explained the high rate of marriage among adult Lisu (Dessaint 1972a:106; Dessaint and Dessaint 1992:165).⁴⁰ A wife generally controlled

⁴⁰ As will be seen, this is a shallowly materialist explanation of marriage. If it were simply a matter of exchange of male products for female products, men could rely on sisters and mothers, and women could rely on fathers and brothers. People marry for other reasons, and those are culturally constructed in specific ways in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. A common myth across the region is of the world having been founded by a brother and sister, having survived flood in a gourd, discovering through many rites of divination that they must marry as there are no other people left in the world (Proschan 2001). This myth expresses and encodes the importance

finances and food distribution in the household (Dessaint 1972a:25, 105; Hutheesing 1990a:197). She had her own money which was not her husband's and if he borrowed money without paying her back she could make her dispute public and bring it for negotiation by a local leader (Durrenberger 1971). Social relationships tended to be treated as contractual, even marriage.

However, Hutheesing focused directly on the nature of gender inequality in Lisu households and found a pronounced hierarchy within the household (Hutheesing 1990a). The household was demarcated particularly by the daily life of the women, whose movements were restricted to the domain of the household. This was not a "physical block to which women were tied" so much as the labor of women sharing the duties of the household together around the house and in their fields (Hutheesing 1990a:70, 72). As such, women's daily movements traced the boundaries of household and allegiance groups. Women's movements were restricted to the extent that women "had blank spots on their cognitive maps" regarding other households in the village (Hutheesing 1990a:5-6). This was still very true in Revealed River in the 1990s. Even school girls knew nothing of their school mate neighbors in the village. Back in the village on vacations, they asked me who was in the village and who was returning to school and when.

Hierarchically informed relationships within the household marked it as a separate unit. A seniority principle prevailed within the household and extended family (Hutheesing 1990a:124). For instance, names were based on gender and birth order, which meant that everyone in the village had the same names. Rules of propriety forbade certain kin from talking about intimate matters with or in front of a range of kin of the opposite sex, *e.g.*, with parents, spouse's parents,

of cross-gender relationships. In particular, there appears to be a common ritual discourse that constructed marriage as necessary to becoming an adult, essential to personhood. Such views were very highly developed by Lahu in Yunnan (Du 1999). But the importance of pairs heading households was also emphasized in Tai kingdoms in which the *cao* (lord) allocated land among the members of the community and would not allocate it to a household that did not have a pair at its head. Therefore, widows, widowers, and the divorced had to find another partner as soon as possible in order to keep their land allocation. This occurred in a very different political economic situation (plowing, irrigated lowland rice, a kingdom) in which there was a gendered division of labor but which was by no means highly marked (observers, especially those who had worked with Chinese peasants, were flabbergasted by the porousness of Tai gender divisions (*cf.* Potter 1976; Potter 1977).

siblings, oB of H for a wife/yZ of W for a husband, parallel cousins of either mother's or father's lineage, children and their spouses, the Bs of the wife's parents and the Zs of the husband's parents. Such avoidance behavior was especially marked within the household between men and their daughters or daughters-in-law. Avoidance taboos and respect behavior were an important building block out of which a network of relationships were built and maintained; they provided the kin framework that embodied order in Lisu daily life (Hutheesing 1990a:103-4, 107). These were the idioms by which people made claims on their fellow householders.

Household Structure and Composition in Revealed River

The structure of the household had in many ways not substantially changed in the 1990s. The household was constituted by its social relationships and shared labor; they bound themselves to each other through expectations of behavior, such as avoidance taboos. In terms of composition, a large household was the desired ideal for household structure – people spoke of the fun of having lots of people around, of the liveliness and having others to share chores with. This was the stated reason for newly fissioned households setting up next to the parental household in which they had started married life, although as I will argue later, I believe other factors were in force. Most of the households in Revealed River were composed of married couples with their children. The exceptions were young widows and their children, in which case they lived near her parents, and there was one elderly widow living in a separate house although cared for by kin (not her children) in a neighboring house. Older married couples with adult children generally had a younger married couple living with them (this was fluid, but about 10% of households) and a smaller percentage had an elderly parent living with them in Revealed River.

Several key changes in household composition had occurred. First, there were reportedly fewer elderly in the village due to an expulsion of “opium addicts.” Second, there were a small number of households in which the husbands had left due to their opium addiction or having been jailed by the Thai authorities for opium trafficking or production. Third, most of the children over

the age of 7 or 8 up to about 15 were sent to lowland boarding schools. As a result of children attending school out of the village, there were nearly as many producers as consumers in most households at any given time.

Removal of Elderly Opium Smokers

Opium abuse was once uncommon among Lisu. Its use occurred in specific contexts. Young men, not yet married, sometimes “played with the pipe” for a short period of time before getting married and taking on the responsibilities of adulthood. Opium was also used medicinally. To the extent that there were any regular users, these were elderly people who smoked daily to relieve arthritis pain and other discomforts of old age. These users remained contributing members of society.

In 1991, shortly before I arrived, the village decided that no opium addicts were to be allowed to live within the village. Astoundingly, Thai and western labeling of users of opium as addicts and abusers was extended even to the elderly who used medicinally. This step was taken in part with the encouragement of Project officers, but the initiative was a village strategy to remove Thai soldiers who had been stationed in the village for interdiction. The soldiers caused a lot of problems in the village through drunkenness and importunate behavior toward Lisu women. I was told that one or two families had moved away as a result of that policy and, in fact, three households had left the village that year. Some people, of course, continued to secretly supply their aged mother or father with opium (or, more likely in the 1990s anti-opium environment, heroin, which had become easier to get) at great risk to themselves. Some sent their parents to live with siblings in other villages.

In other villages of the Thirty Thousand cluster that eventually followed Revealed River’s example, some chose to move their parents outside of the boundaries of the village, building them a house in the forest and taking food and opium to them every couple of days. In one case, the elderly parents were put in charge of watching over the village’s cattle herd; they lived in a shack

out in the middle of a pine forest. When I visited, it was very pleasant, but they were very old and likely lonely. No one I spoke to ever admitted to expelling their elders in this fashion; I heard only of what “they” did to “their” parents.

In such cases, households lost the labor of elderly parents in child care. One of the changes in See the Tiger village was that fields were much further away than they had been in the past and those fields were often open, dry, and unprotected, making them unsafe for young children. It had become more difficult for women to care for their children and carry out field work as the female domain became more dispersed. Baby-sitting had become a separate task located in the home (Hutheesing 1990a:136). As a result, elderly parents’ role in watching the house and children while their adult children worked in the fields was increasingly important. Women in Revealed River similarly complained of the distance of their fields and the baby-sitting role of grandmothers was important, but I was unable to determine if it had become more important than in the past and whether expelling elderly opium smokers had affected their patterns of child care. It was impossible to determine the accurate ages of older people, but there were very few village-bound elderly people and only one possible opium user.

“Widows” of Opium Smokers and the Incarcerated

Another ‘new’ household type was that of women who were in effect widowed because their husbands had been arrested for involvement with opium or in the heroin trade. In one case, the couple and their children had been living with the wife’s parents. He was an opium user and possibly trafficked; he was jailed in Bangkok. His wife continued on in a small, separate house attached to that of her parents. Each year, she and another woman waited for the list of prisoners granted amnesty from the King of Thailand in celebration of his birthday; their husbands’ names were never on these lists. The husband of one other young woman left the village due to his opium addiction. In time, she returned to her natal family in another village with their two small children. All of these female-headed households, even when living with their parents, were very

poor since they did not have their husband's labor and had a couple of young children to care for. They faced a lifetime of poverty, as their households would be barely able to produce subsistence, much less surplus, given the lack of adult labor available.

Children to Lowland Boarding Schools

The practice of sending children out of the village to school was in striking contrast to practices 30 years ago. Lisu parents did not want their children to go to these schools as they feared losing control over their children, and so they moved away from government schools (Dessaint 1972a:174). On the contrary, in Revealed River it was rare to see children between the ages of 7 and 15 in the village except on school breaks. By my calculations, 61% of Revealed River children below the age of 15 were in lowland schools; another 29% of children, generally very young or from very poor families, were in the Mountain School. In total, 90% of village children attended some sort of Thai school. Those not registered were infants and toddlers. This was an increasingly common strategy, spoken of as a chance to improve their children's future (*cf.* Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992:181).

When possible, the children were sent to the Department of Public Welfare boarding school on the outskirts of Chiang Mai. Not all children could get into this school, although Thailand mandated universal education. Few went beyond 6th or 7th grade, one reason being that parents could not afford the school fees. I observed one woman attempt to get a certificate of poverty to enable her daughter to continue school without fees, an incident that infuriated the teachers posted in the Mountain School as they considered her well-to-do. She was the sister of one of the faction leaders in the village and lived in a 'handicrafts village' near the market town of Mae Malae. These residents had even less legal standing to live in their village than did the residents of Revealed River to live in theirs. In addition, they had no agricultural land so they subsisted by hosting tourists and selling handicrafts. They may have been cash rich, but it was barely enough to provide secure subsistence.

If the child lacked the necessary household registration papers, was too young or crippled, parents sent their male children to Thai Buddhist temple boarding schools, which were free, where they were often ordained as novices. The reputation of temple schools varied, however. Some parents complained that their children were beaten and, most of all, underfed – possibly the children were compelled to follow the daily fasting practices of the Buddhist monks. It was considered a very poor alternative to the government run boarding schools, especially if the temple was far from Revealed River and the parents could not travel there easily to pick up their children. One opium widow, desperate for help, made the trip with me to Chiang Mai to try to find a temple school to take her 6 year old son, a eye-opening experience for both us because the conditions at some of these schools were harsh by Lisu standards. Some sent their children to government schools in small towns far enough away from Revealed River to require the children to live there. Wealthy families, that is, Yunnanese Chinese/Lisu families with commercial enterprises, were able to send their children to private schools in the city of Chiang Mai.

The Mountain School was supposed to be run for three weeks out of every four, but the teachers were rarely present for more than two weeks at a time. The school was rudimentary and the Lisu villagers did not think much of it nor of the teachers. However, as noted, almost every child over five spent much of the day at the school. The teachers complained that the parents treated them like baby-sitters, and in fact they probably did. On the other hand, the parents also understood that this would prepare their children for entry into lowland schools when they were old enough.

The teachers in the Revealed River Village “Mountain School” and adherents of the self-sufficiency philosophy of the Project were bitterly cynical about the practice of Lisu villagers sending their children to government boarding schools rather than keeping them in the village and supporting the school. In their view (that of people doing good who did not feel appreciated, despite the gulf between their conceptions of good and the conceptions of those receiving the good), Lisu villagers only sent their children to boarding schools to get the government to feed

them. They were too lazy to feed their own children, the Thai teachers said. This, of course, did not acknowledge the deep concerns and fears parents had for their children's future in the changing political economy of Thailand and their strategies for survival. It also did not recognize the very real difficulties some households faced in caring for young children given the contraction of the agricultural economy. Most households faced rice shortages for part of the year – by the time of the First Fruits ceremony in August, we all ate far more corn and cucumbers than was satisfying because rice was in short supply. In Durrenberger's terms, a household that sent its children to a boarding school achieved a more favorable consumer/worker ratio; it reduced drudgery and increased household productivity. In fact, the practice essentially eliminated the main non-producing consumers at critical points of the year. The children returned home annually for the school break after the harvest, but were away from the village for the period of rice shortage in the agricultural cycle. They completed school and returned to the village at about the age of 15, the time when they were physically ready to start contributing to household production.

Analysis of Changes in Household Structure

Lisu villagers carried out specific strategies to achieve culturally constructed goals of maintaining autonomy and household reputation. The adjustments they made to the exigent conditions of life in northern Thailand in the 1990s were in keeping with their prior text, but they potentially had different consequences from those intended. While a new type of household had not been created, certain tensions arose in the relationships among household members.

Changes in Household Composition

The decision to move opium smokers out of village was a startling strategy, but comprehensible in the context of the culturally formed desire for autonomy. As part of national drug interdiction policy, two to three soldiers had been posted in the village to prevent illegal activities. But as young Thai men, and soldiers, isolated, lonely, armed, and with the power of the

state behind them, they caused a lot of problems in the village. Told me repeatedly that the soldiers drank heavily and threatened people with their weapons; they expected female companionship, holding many of the Thai stereotypes about the promiscuity of hill tribe girls, and treated the women rudely; they disrupted the evening classes at the Mountain School, which were adult learning classes geared toward the married women of the village. (I heard of similar and more specific incidents from a nearby village that had soldiers posted in it while I was living in the area, in one case resulting in the soldiers targeting a young man who attempted to protect his wife) The people of Revealed River village found it onerous to be watched over; they spoke of their loss of freedom; it was a constant theme when Lisu discussed the government in their village. Thus, they took group action, with the Project's support, that resulted in the soldiers being removed from the village. Most people were reluctant to talk about the decision-making directly, but over time it became clear that they felt compelled to do this by Project officials because it was the only way to have the soldiers removed and regain everyday autonomy away from the daily gaze of representatives of the state. In expelling opium addicts, they had demonstrated their trustworthiness and good citizenship in the terms dictated by the project. While this returned a certain degree of autonomy to their daily lives, it came at the cost of adhering even more closely to Thai national goals of modernization.

Schooling and Transformation: Tensions in Relations between Parents and Children

Lisu parents sent their children to school as a specific strategy with two purposes. One was to expand the household skills 'portfolio' through diversification, equipping members of the household to adapt to the encompassing dominance of Thai society in their lives. The other reason was more immediate – sending children away reduced the burden on productive adults in the household, despite any costs associated with school fees. The practice also ensured their children had reliable food at times of food scarcity in the mountain agricultural cycle. However, these responses to local, shifting conditions, with the goal of maintaining household autonomy

and increasing household reputation, had the potential to exacerbate generational tensions inherent in household relations. These were unintended consequences. Children could not be encouraged to attend lowland Thai schools and return fully socialized as Lisu. I saw this tension in several interactions between teenage children and their less worldly parents as their immediate interests diverged. And yet, children saw their own interests as wrapped up on their parents' and household's interests, so such tensions did not lead them to abandon their household and family obligations.

The position of Lisu parents toward Thai education indicated their insecurities about their children's future. Their conception of the future for their children was based in part on their own experience; to survive meant to be able to deal with economic agents (buyers in the market, middlemen with whom they signed contracts to produce crops) and Thai government officials who had a great deal of control over the production decisions of households in the village. They needed to learn to speak Central Thai, read and write, and know arithmetic. Lowland education gave them connections outside the village considered necessary for the survival of the household, especially in terms of the viability of the children's future household. I never heard a Lisu parent express an interest in or belief that their child would be able to compete with the Thai or become wealthy by Thai standards, but I was told that Lisu was a dying language and that everyone needed to be able to speak Thai.

Older parents with less facility in Central Thai⁴¹ in the upper village neighborhood relied on their children for dealing with the lowland marketers to whom they sold their crops. In the days following one New Year, a mother and her teenage son argued vehemently because he wanted to

⁴¹ Middle-aged and older men, and some women, tended to speak Northern Thai. Classified as a 'dialect' (e.g., a language without an army), Northern Thai was not understood by speakers of Central Thai. Central Thai was the national language; Northern Thai was considered 'country.' In the 1930s, nation-building policies not only discouraged the use of Northern Thai, its script and books in it were banned. Northern Thai histories kept in the northern temples were burned. Despite a recent resurgence in Northern Pride, Central Thai was far more widespread than ever before, due to the influence of national media and the national educational system, the main means of creating the imagined community of the nation.

go to a dance (a *dam hua*) at the Forestry Center and meet girls, and his mother insisted he come with her to translate on a trip by truck to a neighboring valley to trade and to visit a married daughter. She won, and he came with us, begrudgingly, grumbling and sulky. Many parents had come to rely on their children to read Project announcements such as edicts regarding land use. Some of the new crops were planted and sold under contractual agreement with corporations such as United Fruit and Boonrawd Brewery (makers of Singha beer). The Project personnel played a paternalistic role in monitoring these contracts, forbidding those that they considered ecologically unsustainable or disadvantageous to the farmers. The Lisu resented this; they did not trust the Project personnel to make these decisions for them and suspected them of lining their own pockets or at least making decisions against the interests of the Lisu households. They had a profound objection to loss of control over their household decisions, which they experienced as a lack of freedom or autonomy. As a household strategy for future productivity and autonomy, sending their children to Thai schools was in keeping with culturally constructed goals. They hoped it would ultimately re-focus key decision-making to the household.

Among the consequences to this strategy was the partial exclusion of school-age children from the domain of household ritual. If performance of rituals was a conduit by which family members were bound together in recognized, ordered roles, Lisu children were cut off from that experience and from living in cultural knowledge incorporated through the metaphors expressed in the practice of ritual. Lisu parents recognized this and attempted to compensate by finding venues in which to instill Lisu culture in their children. One of these was the New Year celebrations. Students found it very difficult to get away from school at New Year because it coincided with school activities from which the students could not be excused, such as exams. Many schools would not release their students as a matter of principle, even though a high proportion of the Thai middle-class were of Chinese descent and celebrated Chinese New Year at

the same time.⁴² Teachers, especially those at the DPW hill tribe boarding school, set themselves as guides and mentors (literally, older brothers and older sisters, *phii* in Thai) for hill tribe children. They saw themselves as having a special responsibility for inculcating the Thai way of life, and its particular rituals and calendar, on “tribal” children. Many Thai considered Lisu New Year a drunken, licentious bacchanal and failed to understand its cultural and ritual import. They considered it to be “fun” (Thai: *sanuk sanam*) rather than significant. Finally, many schools, justifiably wary of the dangers of exploitation of children, would not let them leave school except in the company of a recognized adult relative. Therefore, unless a school child’s parent had the time to go to town to fetch them, many students were unable to attend. Male students sometimes ran away for the weekend closest to New Year, but to the best of my knowledge no girl ever did this; female roles for Lisu precluded them traveling without the protection of male kin, and both their parents and teachers had impressed upon them the dangers of being kidnaped into the sex trade. On the occasions when New Year coincided with a weekend, I was pressed into hurriedly driving students back to school for classes.⁴³

One ritual consequence of children’s schooling out of the village was the increased importance of Little New Year (*euyipha*) in the village. Little New Year, also known as male New Year because it was a time for young men to visit other villages for courtship, was celebrated in the lunar month following Big New Year (*tsi-pae-khaw*). In the past, it had not been a large celebration and not all Lisu had celebrated it (Hutheesing 1990a:158). In Revealed River, it had become increasingly important in the village calendar because of the calendar of lowland schools.

⁴² In fact, the Head of the Watershed Development Unit in which the Thirty Thousand cluster was located never celebrated Lisu New Year because he, as a Chinese-Thai, was obligated to return to visit his parents each year at the same time. Chinese-Thai were well aware of the ritual importance of returning to visit parents at this time – and they currently have the power in Thailand to practice their own family rituals.

⁴³ The Thai teachers did not even like a stranger bringing the students back to school if they had managed to leave for a weekend. Foreigners were particularly suspected of having designs on sexually exploiting hill tribe children, as Thai middle class discourse is that the problems of modern day immorality, including the flourishing sex trade, are the result of the extreme sexual freedom of the Other, Westerners.

Children and teenagers swarmed the village at this time. It was their chance to celebrate New Year, the culmination of Lisu custom, to dress beautifully, display their household's repute, and practice the dances that were such an important part of Lisu 'custom' and all of which a girl had to learn before she was ready to marry (Gillogly 2000).

Much ritual had been centered in the household, a private domain relatively under the control of the elders of the household and as such it played a significant role in cultural reproduction. Even as new spirits were added into the cosmology of the Lisu world (Durrenberger 1989; Hutheesing 1990a), relationships of household members with ancestral spirits remained consistent. With the increased control of the Thai state in Lisu villages, households began to lose control over household ritual. One striking case was the time when the Lisu New Corn or First Fruits ceremony occurred on the same day as the Thai Mother's Day (August 12, the birthday of the Queen of Thailand). The Project held a ceremony at the Watershed Development Center in honor of the Queen and all mothers and expected a substantial number of the villagers to attend. But this was a day meant to be devoted to household ritual. Teenagers, however, were anxious to attend the festivities, where there would be food, music, and a chance to flirt. As one young teenage girl hopped into the back of a pick-up truck to go to the Watershed Center, her father followed her and a fight ensued. She should not be leaving, he said; she saw no point in sitting around watching ritual being performed. At that point, one of the Mountain Teachers stepped in, saying they needed to honor and pay respect to the Queen. There was an implicit threat that the Lisu would not be considered properly Thai if they did not participate, which was part of the discourse of trying to maintain the right to continue to live on their land. The daughter left – the state had won over the authority of the head of the household.

Autonomy and Hierarchy in Lisu Social Structure

Autonomy and hierarchy were significant and conflicting principles in Lisu social relations. Hierarchy was based on gender and age (both birth order and generation). Gender difference was fixed by cosmological conceptions (Durrenberger 1989), although not in outright power relations in daily interactions. These were enacted in peoples' lives various ways, through the layout of the house, restriction of women's domains ("Women may not wander"), and standards of shyness and shame (Hutheesing 1990a:53-54, 61, 89). The seniority principle permeated household relations, enforced through customs of naming and avoidance taboos. Although not cosmologically fixed as were gender differences, the seniority principle was embedded in daily practice. Children were named by birth order as well as gender, *e.g.*, First Son, Amipha or Abépha; First Daughter, Amima; Second Son, Alépha; Second Daughter, Aléma; Third Son, Asépha; Third Daughter, Aséma; and so on. Children were expected to marry by birth order, although a fine in the bride price of a girl married out of order "washed the face" of the elder unmarried daughter to alleviate her shame. (Boys would rarely marry out of order because they were dependent on their parents' support in paying bride price; it would have caused extreme shame to an older son for his parents to buy a bride for a younger son before him.) The avoidance and respect taboos that maintained this order were spoken of in terms of reputation, shyness, and shame, not superiority or greater power. In terms of intergenerational relationships, children, even as adults, were expected to be obedient to the head of the household, to follow his bidding. These social rules constructed the household and lineage as a set of idealized social relations.

Yet this existed in a strikingly egalitarian social context, as noted by Dessaint, Durrenberger, Chaipigusit, and others. Even though Durrenberger meticulously documented the hierarchy in Lisu ritual and cosmology, he concluded that "...outside the ritual sphere, hierarchy is

not important" (Durrenberger 1989:34).⁴⁴ And Lisu society was, indeed, characterized by a high degree of egalitarianism, both on the household and individual level. The frame for this in Lisu was *myi³-do⁵*, or *repute* (which Lewis and Lewis (1984) interestingly glossed as "desire for primacy"). Wealth is the only indication of good *myi³*; it must constantly be proven. Each household and individual sought *repute*, demonstrable only through productivity and display of status. Therefore, *repute* had to be constantly demonstrated and defended; any slight was detrimental and apparently small offenses could become causes for major social rifts. "In an egalitarian system, the amount of prestige is ambiguous, and people must constantly prove they have as much as anyone else. There is, therefore, consumerism and a work ethic" (Durrenberger 1989:24). The inverse of *repute* was shame. It could be brought about by inability to fulfill one's obligations, for instance, to be unable to reciprocate feasting, and also by slights from others. In this way, concepts of self and household status were integrated with economic behavior.

Hierarchy and egalitarianism were worked out within the household in the potentially contradictory modes of respect/avoidance and *repute*. Lisu children were encouraged to be assertive, to express themselves, and to be independent (Chaipigusit 1989:180; Hutheesing 1990a:120). Most disputes in the village were settled through negotiation. The strength of one's household, lineage, and allegiance group could affect the outcome of negotiations, but key was the ability to speak well, to carry one's point in argument (Durrenberger 1976b). In a case described by Dessaint, when the headman's younger brother died, his eldest son was only 20 years old but negotiated to keep all of his father's inheritance against his father's brothers because he was a more aggressive speaker (Dessaint 1972a:131). I observed this repeatedly but did not realize how important it was until I was yelled at by a farmer for disturbing his work by telling him that the Watershed Unit teachers were looking for him to buy plums. I yelled back

⁴⁴ Part of the reason for the discrepancy between the findings of Durrenberger and Dessaint, and those of Hutheesing was difference in focus. Hutheesing studied gender relationships, specifically women and the domestic domain. This was outside the purview of the earlier researchers, who had been more concerned with the egalitarianism between households and men, that is, the lack of political hierarchy.

saying I had only carried the message and I thought he wanted to sell his darned plums. We got along much better afterwards. In an illustrative case, I watched one father, Headman Red, sit with his young son and discuss a cut Red had gotten. Headman Red was domineering and largely feared around the village. First he told his son he had gotten the cut one way, when in fact the boy knew he had not. He encouraged the boy to assert what he knew. Then they discussed the different ways to heal the cut. The father's daughter, about 12 years old, who went to the Thai government boarding school and had hopes of continuing her education, then stepped in and told her father the way she thought he should take care of the wound, specifying what they had taught her in the school. Her father disagreed, she disputed back. This was a bantering rather than an antagonistic interaction, but it was very clear that the children were encouraged to assert themselves. While shyness and modesty were highly valued, especially among young women, young women encouraged each other in being more self-assertive. On another occasion, I watched several female patrilineal cousins try to convince another cousin to be more assertive in her interactions with a group of young men because they knew she hoped to marry – "If you don't open your mouth, you won't get any food!" they laughed.

This is not to say that lines of hierarchy in household relations did not exist. A particular point of tension existed between fathers and sons.⁴⁵ Lisu were reported as having a high rate of homicide; in particular, six patricides were reported between 1958 and 1966 (Lewis and Lewis 1984:258). Hutheesing recounts an interview with an older woman who said "My sons want to kill their father. In the other village, two fathers were killed by their sons" (Hutheesing 1990a:130), and another tale in which a father and son argued over who would hunt with the household rifle, which ended with the mother committing suicide (Hutheesing 1990a:105). In Pang Khum, a Lisu/Karen village several miles east/southeast of Revealed River Village, the eldest son (married,

⁴⁵ Another point of tension was between older and younger brothers as they competed for household resources such as wealth for bride price. This tension has been exacerbated in recent years, for reasons I will discuss in the next chapter.

living with his wife in his father's house) chafed greatly at his father's authority, although he ultimately submitted to it (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992:183).

Tensions between fathers and sons were exacerbated by the nebulous character of achieving manhood for young men. Productivity was marked by labor. Young men did little productive work until older than young women, and were not obligated to work hard until they hoped to marry and after marriage, when they lived with either a father or father-in-law, under their control for a considerable period of time. In See the Tiger village, the decreased ability of men to perform their economic roles, particularly as hunters and profitable farmers, and gain reputé, led to their "infantilization" (Hutheesing 1990a:120-121). Conditions in Revealed River Village were very different; economic and ecological deterioration were nowhere near as severe as in See the Tiger, and men still had a respected and productive role in their society at the very least politically through their ongoing negotiation of Lisu rights in the Project. However, there were marked tensions among men in the household, particularly over young men not working. In one dramatic afternoon, a father sent his son to the Army's 'boot camp' for addicts because the son had been smoking opium. It was not unusual for young men to "play with the pipe" before marriage and adulthood. Young men seemed often to be idling, waiting for marriage and adulthood. But this young man had continued to smoke opium to the neglect of his household obligations.

In most cases, however, disputes were far more muted. Like the wives who told Hutheesing they would agree with their husbands but then do as they wished, this was a far more likely tactic among sons, as well. In the earlier example, Red encouraged his daughter to argue with him and was very pleased at how well she was doing in school, but when decisions were made she obeyed him and he did not extend this freedom to disagree to his wife.

Young people wanted to do things that fit their conceptions of autonomy, which, for them, was constructed in terms of an imagined modernity informed by the Thai middle-class standards of their teachers and images conveyed in the Thai media. Parents' dependence on their children as resources for dealing with the Thai state and economy were also sources of tension. So far,

young people's different interests lay in perceptions of others' freedom to do as they liked, to have a good time, to dress well, to make money without working so hard and getting burned by the sun, in short, by their perceptions of modernity. This was further implanted by the fact that there was actually a TV in the village (run by solar power and justified by the need to study Thai).⁴⁶

Lisu parents were aware of their children's desire for more autonomy; it was within the parameters of Lisu cognitive frames and behavior. It resulted in certain tensions. Not all children were deferential all the time and there sometimes were loud public disputes. I observed children (between the ages of 12-16) arguing with their parents. But these tensions were not so much greater than previously as much as occurring on slightly different terms and contexts. It sometimes surprised me that more teenagers and young adults did not leave. The road was near by; they knew Thai; they could have left, as so many young Lisu did in other villages in the 1990s. In fact, they did not. The interests of parents and children were still significantly congruent.

One evening in a Lisu household in the upper village faction, a male Mountain Teacher castigated a young man who had recently returned from school. He had achieved a slightly higher level of education than most children but still had not made it to high school. The family was involved in opening a new swidden field, which was forbidden in the Project and which Thai believed to be a rapacious and destructive form of agriculture. The teacher turned to the boy and yelled at him, "You know better! You've learned better ways, why don't you tell your father to stay in the same field and stop moving around!" The boy looked embarrassed and defended himself in a low voice, glancing over at his father, "He's my father, I have to do what he decides."

Ultimately, young men sought independence by heading their own household; as long as this was

⁴⁶ Girls expressed the most ambivalence about Lisu dress. Many of the girls who had recently left school did not want to dress in full regalia for New Year dancing. Some of this was shyness, since it was a public statement of one's marriageability; for one young woman, she hoped to not discourage her suitor, who was from a poor family. But the discourse was more along the lines of being embarrassed by their traditional clothes. For many, a different kind of shame had been inculcated by being compelled to perform at the lowland boarding schools, turning Lisu custom into a show for Thai tourists. Similarly, Lisu dress had become a performance for foreign tourists; there are endless postcards of elaborately dress Lisu girls all over Chiang Mai and pictures on the Web.

a reasonable expectation, their interests lay in fulfilling their social roles as good sons. There were constraints on how far these tensions went. Parents told me they were aware of the consequences of fighting with their children – running away to town, drug addiction, suicide – and this limited how far parents would exert their authority. There were generational differences in attitudes, but not to the extent that their interests diverged significantly. I believe that this was related in large part to marriage and the possibility of establishing one's own household, the ultimate goal of adulthood. The other factor was the possibility of gaining land to cultivate.

CHAPTER 4

THE HOUSEHOLD DEVELOPMENTAL CYCLE AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION IN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Labor is fundamental to the constitution of the household. Shared ritual performance, the rights and duties of kinship, and shared labor, all create a layer of obligations that increases the density and significance of shared activities. Fundamental to this is shared agricultural labor, as is true in many smallholder economies (Netting 1993:64). As Lisu repeatedly told me, "If we don't work, we don't eat!" The household is the means by which labor is organized and the locus for distribution of the fruits of labor. As such, it is the point of intersection with the environment, food production and social organization, particularly culturally constructed social obligations for consumption and cooperative labor. The household is the main source of labor and its composition determines the possibilities for production of any given household; the composition of the household is the main constraint on available labor (Heald 1991).⁴⁷

This, then, was the fundamental problem for any Lisu household and it is critical for understanding Lisu social organization. In this context, the household developmental cycle becomes very important because it has a great deal to do with how much labor is available in the household. Among the Lisu, this led to marked variations in the wealth of a household, depending on where along the stage of the developmental cycle it was. Lisu social organization under the regime of the opium economy was highly egalitarian because opium supported access to wealth

⁴⁷ Labor as the main constraint was especially noticeable in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia for much of its history because of the low population densities there, with the notable exception of northern Vietnam. That is, much land was available, all that was needed was the labor to work it. Pre-colonial political processes were based on acquiring or attracting labor to work open lands. At times, people were appropriated, for instance, as prisoners of war resettled in the victor's lands (Nimmanhaeminda 1965).

to everyone. Everyone held the means to production and the only limit or constraint on this was the labor available to the household, which could be ameliorated by hiring labor; neither land nor seed were significant constraints. Given the relationship between modes of production and the social organization of labor, changes in household relations as a result of the end of the opium can be expected. However, the precise nature of such changes depended on the nature of the existing household structure, such as social obligations as formed through the idiom of kinship and gender.

One of the most conspicuous differences between Revealed River in the 1990s and the villages described by Dessaint and Durrenberger 25 years previously is that there was no opium. I lived in that village and traveled around the northwestern mountains of Thailand for two and a half years, and the only poppies I saw were in front of a Chinese drug lord's shack, planted for the edification of the foreign tourists, and in one Revealed River woman's home garden, where she asserted it was necessary to make her mustard greens grow well (she pulled them up before they attracted the notice of officials). I have seen more poppies in front of U.S. Midwestern farmhouses. This was a far cry from the days of "opium poppies from horizon to horizon." In the area controlled by the Project, opium cultivation area was reduced by 50% from 1984 to 1991 (Tan-Kim-Yong, Limchoowong and Gillogly 1994). The ONCB (Office of Narcotics Control Board) claims even more success: area devoted to opium cultivation in Thailand was reduced by 97% from 1961 to 1991 and production by kilograms by 94% (because productivity per unit of land increased as a result of interdiction) (Renard 2001:36).⁴⁸ The interdiction of opium production had brought about a shift in agricultural strategies; like a geological fracture, a deep and

⁴⁸ These are the official figures. Among people who work in northern Thailand, they are suspect. First, the initial figures for production are believed to have been inflated; several U.N. experts told me that these had been inflated both by methodology and by the Thai government's desire to make the reductions in future years look more dramatic. Second, the figures for current production are probably underestimated. Farmers such as the Lisu of Revealed River had adjusted their opium cultivation techniques to avoid detection. This will be discussed later in this chapter. However, it was clear that opium was by no means the base of the agricultural economy that it once had been.

fundamental shift brought about a re-structuring on the surface that did not precisely match the deep shifts. What, then, are Lisu farmers doing to survive? What have the consequences been for Lisu households?

Agricultural Economy and Resource Allocation

Previously, the agricultural resource base had been rice/corn/opium, pigs and chickens as livestock, some pack horses, and use of forest resources by hunting by young men and gathering by women. Under recent political economic conditions, opium cultivation had been greatly reduced and farmers had sought a variety of replacements for it. The popular view is that opium has resulted in less diverse fields, leaving fields unprotected from erosion and loss of fertility, and resulting in heavy chemical inputs that have negative environmental consequences for those downstream. What I found was that Lisu farmers were putting a great deal of effort into experimenting with new crops in order to find a replacement for opium. In fact, the agricultural resource base had become much more diverse, so that farmers were faced with that much more complexity and risk in the agricultural system. This put strains on the management of household production. None of the replacement crops fulfilled the same niche as opium for both ecological and environmental reasons, and the end of the opium economy has engendered greater risks and insecurities for Lisu households.

One misty winter evening late in 1993, I caught a ride to Chiang Mai with Headman Red's younger brother. He was the truck driver of their lineage and was transporting produce to the market for sale. I sat in the bed of the truck with several Lisu men and a few women surrounded by burlap sacks of mushrooms and some odds and ends of vegetables. It was too cold and windy to talk much. Proud of his truck, quite the confident young man about town in the village, he became increasingly nervous as we approached the town. We stopped at the larger "traditional" market at the edge of the university, on the north side of Chiang Mai City, pulling in among the other mud and dust-covered trucks of produce farmers. It was there he approached me, diffident

and unsure, and asked me where I was going next, and where should he go? Despite being the truck driver, the sophisticated one who served as the liaison between village farmers and the markets, he had very little knowledge of where to go and what to do. Here was this large and vibrant market in which urbanites could buy all of the rural foods from their childhood, but there was no clear wholesaler to sell to. All he knew was that mushrooms were highly valued, as forest products often were, and that they sold for much more in the market than his family had been getting from local middlemen in Pai. He could not go to each of the marketers and offer his produce, or stand with his mushrooms and sell them from the back of his truck. Either strategy left him exposed to the attentions of police, soldiers, and officials of the market, as he was not licensed; and as an upland minority man with, at best, a “blue card,” (akin to the green card of the United States), he was particularly vulnerable to harassment. He had granted my request for a ride because he hoped to use my connections to find a better buyer. Unfortunately, I knew nothing of the complexities of buying and selling in the market. I did the next best thing – I took him to a woman from whom I rented a room in Chiang Mai, who bought and sold things as a sort of hobby. She bought a small amount of mushrooms and sent him to another location.

In the course of this evening, he also confidentially asked me not to tell anyone about the mushrooms. They were forbidden by the Project as being environmentally unsound. Growing mushrooms entailed cutting down trees in the forest and planting the mushroom spoor on the rotting log. It was an unsustainable practice as new trees had to be cut down periodically. It was the cultivation of mushrooms in Yongbei Ting and Dayao in northwestern Yunnan in the early 19th century that had resulted in environmental destruction within ten years, alienation of Lipo from their land there, and a multi-ethnic revolt against the Chinese, ultimately unsuccessful (Daniels 1994). Ironically, the market made this a Lisu practice a century and a half later. Red’s brother also did not want anyone to know of his new crop, for fear that others would follow suit and thus lower the price. This had happened repeatedly in the uplands in the search for new crops (see “New cash crops, new production limits”).

New Crops, New Subsistence, New markets

Mushrooms were only the most recent attempt to develop a reliable cash crop. Each year, it seemed, a new next great crop was being tried out. Crops in Revealed River included taro, coffee, red beans, white potatoes, barley, cut flowers, and fruit trees such as plum, lychee, longan, mango, and Chinese peach. Other crops either attempted by Thirty Thousand farmers or planted elsewhere in the mountains of northern Thailand as a replacement for opium as a cash crop included carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, and strawberries. Livestock had been supplemented with herds of cattle grazed just outside the boundaries of the Project protected forest; some had only 3-4 head of cattle, but others were reported to have 30-40 head. A Chinese farmer and a few others in Revealed River had attempted fish ponds as part of an integrated house garden system, but civit cats and a type of otter had decimated the fish population because the pond was too shallow. Aside from these cash crops, farmers grew rice, corn (some for themselves and much of it for livestock), cucumbers, mustard greens, peppers, a sort of pumpkin, and onions as food crops; some of these, such as peppers, could be sold as cash crops as well. Men hunted assiduously if with little result; the occasional pig was highly valued as meat and small birds were sometimes eaten, but often sold. Women gathered items such as bamboo shoots, which they preserved for the hot and dry season when there were no vegetables in the fields; these were a welcome addition to the diet, and were reported to reduce signs of malnutrition among Lisu children.

Rice Insufficiency

A key point is that enough rice for subsistence could not be grown in these mountains at these population densities (Durrenberger 1976c:636). Upland rice appears to be very sensitive to a wide range of environmental stresses, including soil-borne pests, weeds, drought, erosion, and the physical and chemical limitations of the soil (Salzer 1993:84). While in some cases in Southeast Asia upland rice swiddening could be almost as productive as irrigated rice in

conditions of very low population density, as was found in northern Burma in the years immediately preceding World War II or the Central Highlands of Vietnam before the 1975 (Leach 1965 [1954]:24; Cooper 1984:151), in many cases, it was far less productive per unit of land, yielding as little as 30-40% of irrigated land yields (Kunstadter and Chapman 1978:16). Swiddening systems depended on short cultivation/long fallows (*e.g.*, 1-2 years of cropping and 7-20 years of fallow) to maintain system fertility (Kunstadter and Chapman 1978; Rambo 2001). Swiddening was an ecologically suitable agricultural strategy in conditions of low population density (Rambo 1983). Lisu in northern Thailand had been long fallow swiddeners, usually pioneer, but pioneer swiddening was not the only agricultural method in the Lisu repertoire, as discussed in Chapter 2. The cultivation techniques of swiddening tended to protect against erosion because unburnt trees and brush were left lying on the fields and only dibble sticks were used so that soil was only minimally disturbed. Damage only occurs when such systems are intensified (Dove 1983).

By the mid-1970s, some researchers considered upland rice to be moving into a “terminal” phase. Hill Tribe Research Center researchers noted the great strain being placed on montane resources.⁴⁹ Among the Hmong of Tak Province, rice production was below the national average and production was insufficient to supply local consumption in most seasons (Keen

⁴⁹ Other factors must be considered as sources of this strain as well. Between 1962 and 1977, the area planted to upland food crops around the country had increased by 500 percent. The value of upland food crops such as maize, peanuts, soya beans, and mung beans increased by 800 percent in the same time period. With the value of upland crops increasing, the value of the land to lowland peasants without access to land on which to plant these crops also increased (Meer 1981:63) and many landless peasants moved into the hills to find land. Throughout the post-WWII period, the amount of commercial timber cut increased steadily, as did the foreign exchange it brought in (see Cooper 1984: 11 for the period of 1968-1973). The “quantum cut” of timber from concessions (putative legally cut timber) rose from 2.6 to 3.1 million cubic meters in Thailand as a whole in 1979, although the government reduced the number of logging concessions (Wun’Gaeo 1992:19). Furthermore, logging for sale in the high mountains was not feasible until it was possible to transport logs out of the area – large-scale timbering depended on the building of roads, which did not enter full-scale development until about 1977 and probably peaked in the mid- to late 1980s (Tapp 1979:xii). Upland villagers did not log exported timber. However, they have suffered the consequences of environmental destruction, removal of land from cultivation, and national condemnation for their perceived damage to national watersheds.

1968). In the total Mae Sa watershed in 1974, swidden accounted for 30.1% of total land under rice production, but only 18.7% of total rice (Cooper 1984:151). A survey in Nam Long, Mae Hong Son showed that 40% of upland farming households produced insufficient rice to feed themselves. A few years later, Salzer found that the great majority of farmers were living below bare subsistence levels (Salzer 1993:37, 79-81).

This was due in large part to increases in population densities in swidden agriculture villages in northern Thailand from the late 1960s to 1983 (Fox *et al.* 1995). The increase in population density in the northern Thai uplands (due to natural population increase, immigration of ethnic minority peoples from Burma and Laos, and migration of Thai farmers and loggers into the mountains) as well as changes in crop patterns further strained the agroecological system to the point of failure. At the same time, conversion of subsistence-oriented swidden systems to permanent agriculture, human settlements, mining and dam building caused severe loss of forest cover and decrease in the biodiversity, especially that variety unique to succession in fallow plots (Fox 2000). Between 1976-1983, due to government intervention to prevent cutting of closed-canopy forest cover, swiddeners began to rely more heavily on the use of fallow lands, including sparse forest, for their crops. In short, farmers began to re-use lands without an adequate fallow period (Fox *et al.* 1995).

Tropical mountain soils tend to have poor to medium nutrient content and be shallow and erodible on slopes; they are unable to support long-term cultivation without long periods of fallow or considerable inputs (terracing, irrigation, composting, recycling, fertilizer) in order to replenish soil organic matter because the nutrients lie in the vegetation (Van Keer *et al.* 1998:7, 26, 38, 41, 67). In a swidden system, burning the vegetation releases the nutrients in ash. Burning improved soil chemical status through ash and heat and reduced a wide range of crop pests (Van Keer *et al.* 1998:57-61). It was a fast, low labor, and effective way to make plant nutrients available and to control pests as the energy expenditure of fire did the labor for humans (Rambo 1984). The fertility of the field only lasts a few years, however; typically, yields decreased dramatically if

upland rice was grown for more than two years on the same plot (Salzer 1993:84; Van Keer *et al.* 1998:115). The sustainability of such systems was also dependent on the nature of the soil and slope, as well as community institutions to ensure undisturbed fallow. The introduction of permanent agriculture resulted in decreasing organic matter in the soil and the consumption of limited plant nutrients, and the system experienced decreased soil fertility (Rerkasam and Rerkasam 1999). As a result, upland rice has increasingly unstable productivity (Salzer 1993:84).

Swiddening was a viable strategy for household survival in northern Thailand given the right crop mix – opium had made all of the difference in the viability of local economies and the uplands could never have supported a population of this size without a significant cash crop such as opium. Lisu subsistence depended on growing opium, the proceeds of which were used to buy rice (Dessaint 1972a; Durrenberger 1976c; Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992:37; Salzer 1993:126-127). The anti-opium campaigns changed this mix and brought about increased strain on land resources in the uplands.

Opium

Opium was a subsistence-oriented cash crop. In the case of upland opium-growers such as Lisu, less fertile soils were still usable for opium. As discussed previously, its introduction opened up a new econiche in the mountains that obviated the existing constraints on carrying capacity. Opium could be grown in conditions where rice could not; in particular, it could be grown for up to 10 years on one plot. Furthermore, as a saleable item, its profits were used to buy rice to feed the household. Commercial farming was the means to a continued independent existence as independent farmers in their own villages. Dependence on global markets provided for household autonomy.

In northern Thailand, there was a ready market for opium; a purchaser could always be found for the crop (Durrenberger 1976c:636), unlike the more recent cash crops. Opium is very high value per weight, thus easy to transport. It is storable, it does not spoil, so that farmers could

hold on to at least some of their harvest for sale at a later time when prices were good. Finally, buyers came to them. Opium caravans once wended their way through the mountains of northern Thailand buying directly from the farmers after the harvest; an enterprising farmer could choose to take his opium to a lowland town himself if he so chose, providing he had connections and patience, but it was not necessary (Durrenberger 1976c:636; Durrenberger 1983a:90). It was these characteristics that had made opium so transformative in Lisu society over 100 years ago.

Lisu farmers' production strategies indicate that there was a dynamic relationship between the cultivation of rice and opium. The household goal was to provide enough subsistence for rice, preferably by cultivation or, barring that, by opium produced and sold for cash to buy rice. Households could not concentrate on both rice and opium because they competed for labor at the same times of the annual agricultural cycle. A decision had to be made to emphasize one crop or the other in each particular case (Dessaint 1972a:122). If there was sufficient rice for household consumption needs, surplus opium profits could be allocated to things such as household supplies or invested in the status system through New Year display, soul-calling ceremonies and marriages. If insufficient rice was produced, opium profits were used to buy rice for household consumption (Durrenberger 1983a:94; Durrenberger 1976c:634-5). The more fertile the land, the more a household concentrated on rice production rather than opium, the likelihood of this increasing with the numbers of consumers to support. As people stayed in the same area and grew rice for several years in succession, the soil fertility of the place was exhausted. At that point, their choices were to migrate to more fertile lands or to emphasize poppy production as the more profitable and ecologically feasible cash crop and then use the profits to buy rice (Durrenberger 1976c:636). This was the situation of Evil Peaks when Dessaint studied it. The more fertile the land and the more consumers there were in relation to producers, the more effort was expended on rice growing to fulfill household subsistence needs. Most villages practiced a mixed strategy of both opium and rice production (along with corn, mostly to feed pigs). They spent more than half (62%) of their labor growing opium, 28% on growing rice,

and 9% on growing corn (Durrenberger 1983b:221-222). But these percentages do not reflect the differences among households in quality of land and the ratio of productive laborers to non-productive consumers. Based on 1969 mean prices of rice and opium, the value received from one day of labor spent in opium cultivation was almost twice as valuable as a day of labor spent in rice cultivation (Dessaint 1972a:122). In the 1980s in Mae Hong Son, the return to labor of opium amounted to 109/*baht* a day, far more than could be earned with any other crop (Salzer 1993:73). The average optimum portfolio at Evil Peaks in 1969 was less than 75% of a household's labor in opium (and maize) and more than 25% in rice (Dessaint 1972a:126).

Why, then, did Lisu farmers bother to grow rice at all? Because rice was the major component of the subsistence system, and the primary goal was to feed the household (Durrenberger 1976c:636). Another reason was that the prices of rice and opium fluctuated; growing at least a minimum of rice ensured a degree of security in subsistence. The risk of planting opium was greater, especially as Thai and international authorities began to extend effective interdiction into the northern hills; but the profits were significantly greater, especially because the price of opium increased by over 1000% with interdiction (\$43/kg to \$500/kg) (Renard 2001:36). In short, at the household level, production strategies were calculated in such a way as to balance risk against expected return (Dessaint 1972a:126). The variation in production strategies among Lisu villages in the 1960s, that is, emphasis on rice or opium, were a sign of the status of the productive capabilities of the land on which they depended, the amount of labor available to a household, and each household's assessment of the risks. Upland ethnic minority farming households were by no means homogeneous. Among Lisu, strategies at this time were related to the household developmental cycle and the available mix of crops.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Under more recent market conditions, the resource bases of households can be more complex and their strategies reflected this. In an Akha village in Chiang Rai, households could be categorized on the basis of rice sufficiency, existing wealth and engagement in cash farming. Those with the least rice and lowest prosperity did not grow cabbage (the main local cash crop); the most prosperous did (Van Keer *et al.* 1998:20). In Nam Long, Mae Hong Son, the poorest households were the most likely to grow opium as it was the only way for them to achieve minimum household subsistence (Salzer 1993:123-124).

New Cash Crops, New Production Problems

Lisu in Revealed River Village were even more dependent on cash cropping than had been farmers in the previous decades. Land had become a scarce resource. With shortened fallow, limited rotation, and restricted access to new fields, rice production levels plummeted. I was unable to get specific amounts because rice sufficiency was a point of repute for Lisu households and so they were reluctant to admit the extent to which they bought rice (and because the Project philosophy position was that rice was not a necessary staple), but every single household in Revealed River bought rice. The rice fields I saw provided only enough for three months of the year for the households that had worked them. Rice insufficiency was a point about which every household head expressed concern, with the notable exception of the Chinese agricultural leader, who held that it was not necessary to eat rice with every meal (his wife disagreed, bitterly, but submitted to his authority on this). In See the Tiger Village, rice fields were also yielding less. People could not open new fields without being arrested by RFD officials (Hutheesing 1990a:169-70). In fact, many projects advocated abandoning rice cultivation in favor of agroforestry and annual cash crops; models showed that optimal cropping patterns would bring high cash returns and allow farmers to buy as much rice as they needed (e.g., Salzer 1993:118-123). However, such models did not take into account the fluctuating returns and market competition of any cash crop that looked promising, nor the culturally constructed goal of providing basic subsistence dependence first and dependence on the market as only secondary.

The problem of producing rice in the uplands was also a point of concern to many projects in the uplands. To that end, beans and nitrogen-fixing trees and new tilling techniques had been introduced to upland farmers around northern Thailand. The Lisu I knew said that the techniques failed in part because of the weeding problem; my interviews with agriculture officers in other parts of northern Thailand showed this to be a common problem (see also Salzer 1993:66-73; Van Keer *et al.* 1998:103). In agro-ecological systems pushed to the limits, one of the main constraints on the expansion of ecologically sound production was household labor to

weed cultivated plots and weeding requirements increase as fallow time decreases (Perz and Walker 2002:1013). For instance, in the 1950s, Izikowitz reported fallow periods of 12-15 years and 1-2 weedings per season among the Lamet, an upland people of Laos; but average weeding requirements have now increased to between 3.9 weedings per season (Roder, Phengchanh and Keobulapha 1997). The way upland farmers experienced depleted soil was as fields in which the weeding burdens became increasingly onerous; the weeds were grasses, hard to pull out, and each field required twice or three times as many weedings as previously. Women, to whom this back-breaking chore fell, complained of days of work devoted to weeding and physical exhaustion. Women's field work had increased tremendously. In the face of this constraint, farmers turned more to herbicides or mechanical means of weeding that disturbed the thin mountain soils and led to increased erosion.

The new crops required far more in the way of capital inputs than had the previous system of rice/corn/opium. Farmers had to buy seeds or cuttings. The Revealed River farmers were fortunate in that the Project supplied many planting materials, particularly fruit trees. But the farmers often wanted to try crops that the Project did not support and that required acquiring planting material some other way. Many got seeds and cuttings from relatives in other areas. Lisu farmers were largely willing to experiment compared to farmers of other ethnic groups (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992), and there were constant attempts to gain information on the latest crop. Two crops planted by Revealed River farmers had been planted under contract with a large corporation. One was barley for Boonrawd Breweries (makers of Singha Beer), and the other was potatoes for United Fruit. In such cases, the Project oversaw the contracts to ensure environmental soundness and to prevent the farmers from being taken advantage of. They refused to share the specifics of such contracts with me; villagers widely believed that some lower-level, local Project officials received kickbacks for making the land available since this was, legally, land on which no cultivation was to take place at all under the provisions of the Watershed Classifications. I was told by a United Nations official that United Fruit had also attempted to

contract with local farmers to grow strawberries but had been blocked by the Project because it would have required the farmers to pay too much for planting material each year, including boxes in which to plant the strawberries in a special planting medium and requiring heavy fertilizer inputs. Thus, the Project restricted some new crops in order to prevent both environmental destruction, with downstream effects, and heavy indebtedness of the farmers. Despite the usually good intentions of Project officials, Lisu perceived these actions as controlling and a loss of their valued autonomy.

Temperate zone crops such as flowers, potatoes, cabbages, and so on, were prone to pests and disease in the tropical mountains. In an attempt to boost productivity, farmers had started using pesticides, including fungicides, on their crops. The Project discouraged this practice, but almost every farmer found a way to get the chemicals and apply them to their fields. The chemicals were both very expensive and very dangerous; some farmers, recognizing the danger, hired Lahu laborers to apply pesticides for them. By 1992, potatoes were no longer being grown under contract because of a fungus. Once in the soil, the fungus was very difficult to eradicate. Revealed River farmers continued to grow potatoes anyway and market them on their own. The fungus continued to be a problem. Farmers used ever larger quantities of fungicides. They also attempted to compensate for the decrease in productivity by planting more potatoes, closer together, which a United Nations official told me in fact increased the risk of fungus.

In other parts of northern Thailand, the transition to new cash crops had resulted in severe environmental consequences and alienation of land due to the vagaries of the markets. One example came from Thung Joh, the training center for the Project near Pa Pai (the Lisu village Ban Lum was adjacent to Thung Joh, although none of the residents from Durrenberger's day remained). In an attempt to end opium cultivation, the director of the Project introduced cut flowers as a cash crop.⁵¹ Cut flowers did magnificently the first year. The farmers made a good

⁵¹ This information comes from interviews in 1992-1994 with the Project director, Khun Pakorn. By 1994, he had been promoted to Bangkok and his assistant become the Project director.

profit, opium cultivation in the area stopped and rates of deforestation leveled out. But by the second year, upland minority farmers in other areas (mostly Hmong) had discovered the profitability of flowers and soon controlled the market due to their greater proximity to the lowland towns where fresh cut flowers were in demand. The Thung Joh farmers responded by both returning to limited opium cultivation and planting more flowers in order to make up the lost income. This resulted in expansion of fields and increased deforestation.⁵² Of See the Tiger Village, Hutheesing wrote: "In the course of four years I have seen the hill environment become more denuded: stretches which formerly used to be jungly are so no longer. More patches along the road are blackened and used for swidden agriculture..." (1990a:135). Throughout northern Thailand, upland farmers have planted cabbages as a replacement crop for opium. While profitable, the environmental outcomes are claimed to be very severe – drying up of water sources as watershed forests were cut; increased erosion and silting up of lowland farmers' dams; and runoff of chemicals, especially pesticides, killing off fish and poisoning downstream communities (Kaye 1990; Renard 1994; Lohmann 1999; Hutheesing 1999). Upland-lowland conflict over resources have become a severe social problem in northern Thailand, especially as it is tinged with Thai prejudice against uplanders as outsiders, not part of the body of the Thai nation through not being ethnically Thai, not speaking Thai, not being Buddhist (Gilligly 2004).

Land alienation had become another feature of upland societies. In Pang Khum, both Lisu and Khon Mueang (ethnic Northern Thai) farmers have appropriated or bought Karen land (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992). The Lisu were subject to such forces as well. In 1985, after an opium raid caused great economic hardship in See the Tiger Village, five Lisu households planted tomatoes. This crop sold well, in part because they had pre-existing trade connections with lowland dealers. Other Lisu households soon followed suit. Those best positioned to try the new crop were the older, wealthier households; they had sufficient labor, silver jewelry to pawn

⁵² Such a strategy is not unusual for farming households, see Hanks 1972 for how Thai farmers expanded rice production through intensification in the midst of the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s in an attempt to keep household income at stable levels.

and cash from previous opium crops to undertake the costs and risks of tomato growing. They did fairly well, invested in trucks and more land, and continued to expand cultivation. At the same time, wealthier and well-connected (links to influential Thai, for instance) Lisu moved to the area, attracted by the initial profitability of tomatoes. The village doubled in size. Poorer farming households did not do as well. They lost their land, selling it despite not having land deeds, to pay debts from the failure of their tomato crops, and they were reduced to working as laborers on the wealthier farmers' tomato crops or at a coffee plantation set up by a Thai entrepreneur. Land has become a commodity (Hutheesing 1990a:172-173; Hutheesing 1999). In Nam Long, Mae Hong Son, a survey in 1982 indicated that 41% of farm households were in debt to private money-lenders or merchants, usually in the form of cash credit against a portion of the upcoming harvest with crop price and quantity fixed in advance (Salzer 1993:25). For all of the Project's paternalistic attitude toward the Lisu of Thirty Thousand, Lisu households there had at least been protected from this profound economic disintegration.

One day I came across Susati, the Chinese agricultural leader, in his beautiful, multi-storied, home garden – the pride of the Project – tearing up coffee bushes. He told me had decided, at last, that they were a waste of space, but they might make good firewood. Others in the village soon followed suit. The first opium replacement crop introduced to the uplands was coffee, in the 1970s, by a UN official named Richard Mann. At that time, the goal was to find one crop that could completely replace opium (Gillooly 2004); coffee was selling for a high price, it was ecologically suitable, and so it was introduced throughout the opium-growing highlands. Unfortunately, it seems that every other Third World country on the globe decided to plant coffee as well. By the time the coffee plants bore fruit, a period of five years, coffee prices had plummeted and upland farmers in Thailand never got a good profit from it. There were also problems with processing and shipping that reduced the quality of the coffee produced. Every crop tried had the potential to turn out a failure depending on the ecological suitability of the crop to the mountains of northern Thailand and the complexities of world markets. The instability of

prices made household planning particularly difficult. Tomatoes, for instance, varied from 2-15 *baht*/kilo in one season. Coffee was selling for the equivalent 0.02 USD/pound. Mangoes, potatoes, mushrooms – all varied from high to very low prices, dependent upon the season, thus the ripeness and quantity of the item in the market. Produce, unlike opium, could not be saved for sale later. At times, a disconsolate farmer came back with a truckload of mangoes or potatoes that he couldn't sell, at least not for any price that made sense to him, and he brought his produce back rather than sell it at such a severe loss.

The conditions of selling cash crops had changed considerably. Farmers had to develop contacts with lowland Thai middlemen and take their crops to market themselves. I occasionally saw middlemen come to the village, but their trips did not always coincide with the harvests or household needs. To get a better price and take their crops to market expeditiously, farmers had to depend on trucks to take the crops themselves and to buy rice and other household supplies when needed. The means of production had come to include trucks to transport produce and motorcycles to get to far away fields, and this required a significant allocation of household resources to achieve. Kowboi's faction's (the Yipha lineage, of which Kowboi was the head) used truck cost 120,000 *baht* (\$4,800 USD in the exchange rate in the early 1990s); it took several years to pay off. Trucks and motorcycles also required gasoline and regular maintenance, especially given the dust and mud on the poorly maintained roads; payments and maintenance for one truck and one motorcycle could come to 100,000 *baht* (\$4,000 USD) annually (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992:177), thus about half as much as buying the vehicle itself. Poor households who did not have trucks were dependent on wealthier ones to transport their goods, which meant increased cost in getting goods to market (a fee of about 1 *baht*/kilo), not having control over getting perishable produce to market expeditiously, and the fact of being dependent on others. There were two to three trucks in Revealed River Village; each Lisu faction owned its own. Aside from the risks inherent in vehicle ownership (maintenance, accidents), Lisu villagers were also at risk of having their trucks confiscated if they were found to be carrying contraband,

such as opium. A truck owned by a Mae Salaa villager (a satellite village to Revealed River) was confiscated within a year of its purchase due to opium being found on a passenger in the truck. As upland ethnic minority people, they were subject to frequent checks by authorities. Clearly trucks were risky investments, but they were perceived by the Lisu of Revealed River as necessary to avoid creating dependencies on other households or allegiance groups, or paying too high a percentage of the crop's market value to truck owners. Owning a truck was key to maintaining a degree of autonomy in keeping with Lisu practice.

Other potential costs to production included irrigation. Studies in other areas indicate that transition from the opium economy required water storage and supply systems (Salzer 1993:200), and in other parts of the mountains I observed elaborate, even mechanized, irrigation systems, which doubtless added considerably to the capital inputs required for irrigation. The practice favored households with both the cash to build such a system and connections with influential Thai to prevent alienation of the land by the state or claim jumpers. Irrigation on any large scale was rare in Revealed River, due to forestry restrictions, but many farmers did attempt to grow crops on small fields just below water sources by running ordinary irrigation hoses into their fields.

Farming in Revealed River in the 1990s required considerable managerial skill and wide knowledge to know what to plant when and where. Management skills were, in fact, the highest predictor of farming success in a nearby upland village cluster (Salzer 1993:490-43); the skills of a mature household head with sufficient managerial experience and knowledge were often essential to the economic viability of a household (Cain 1978:427). The risks were great. Lisu farmers experienced great insecurity and increased dependency on the leadership of a senior farmer.

Temporal and Spatial Constraints of the New Agricultural Cycle

In addition to the new knowledge and increased risks of opium replacement, Lisu households also faced problems with allocation of labor due to changes in the agricultural cycle and cropping patterns. These were both temporal and spatial.

Temporal Patterns, Old and New

Opium had been congruent with other elements of agriculture. For instance, at Evil Peaks in 1969-1970 (Dessaint 1972a:64-76), the pattern was:

- ▶ Clearing of fields began in February and burning occurred in the dry months of March and April.
- ▶ Corn was planted from late March to early May.
- ▶ Rice was planted somewhat later in May and June, when the rains had begun.
- ▶ Corn was harvested in July through September, starting with sweet corn for human consumption and followed by 'Indian' corn for livestock, particularly pigs.
- ▶ Corn and rice were weeded only once, June and July for corn and July and August for rice.
- ▶ Opium was planted in the corn fields after the corn had been harvested, starting in September. The corn stalks helped to protect the tiny poppy seedlings from washing away until they were established.
- ▶ Rice was harvested and threshed in October and November.
- ▶ Opium was harvested in from mid-December to mid-February.
- ▶ While harvest periods did not coincide, note that poppy took a lot of work, particularly in weeding the tiny seedlings. Opium was weeded several times throughout the growing period. This conflicted with the reaping and threshing of rice and represented a bottleneck.

- In addition, other vegetables were planted around the edges of these fields, particularly the corn fields or mixed with vegetables. These vegetables included: sesame, beans, tomatoes, mustard greens, taro, green beans, potatoes, mushrooms, cucumber, pumpkins, red and black beans, sunflowers, gourds, yams, parsley, onions, and peas, with harvest starting in August and peaking in February (there was a shortage of fresh vegetables from May to June, but Lisu preserved fermented bamboo shoots and other vegetables for these times). Some of the vegetables might have been marketed, depending on local demand. As described in Chapter 2, Lisu were sensitive to local markets in what they chose to plant, whether corn, poppy, rice, cotton, sesame, tobacco, gourds, cotton, and even potatoes for a British garrison (Scott and Hardiman 1983 II:(11) 355; George 1915).

Theoretically, the end of opium cultivation should have meant more time and labor for rice, but it did not. The replacement cash crops conflicted with the planting schedule of rice far more than opium ever had. Note, for instance, that some of the 1990s cash crops in Revealed River had once been cash crops in Evil Peaks in 1969-1970 – potatoes, mushrooms, beans, which could previously have been harvested as-needed throughout the rice harvest. Other cash crops, such as tomatoes (at See the Tiger) or taro (at Revealed River), could be grown in the off-season, but like so many off-season cash crops, they required irrigation from March-May.

In certain respects, the agricultural cycle had not changed much. However, none of the replacement cash crops was able to supercede opium in temporal congruency with rice and corn and no optimal cropping patterns that could compete with rice/corn/opium had been developed (Salzer 1993:91). Of all the cash crops, only barley filled the temporal position left by opium cultivation. This was especially congruent with the Lisu annual ritual cycle. One of the advantages of opium had been that opium immediately preceded New Year so that cash was available to buy pigs, alcohol, and new clothes (see also Hutheesing 1990a). In contrast, even if the barley crop was harvested before New Year, the company and the Project (through which

payments were distributed) did not release the proceeds until months later. One year, this resulted in one of the smaller and poorer villages in the Thirty Thousand cluster to postpone New Year by a month in hopes of receiving their payments in time to buy new clothes and put on a reputable display.⁵³

Transformations of Spatial Patterns

Spatially, the system had also become more diverse and disaggregated. Trucks and motorcycles allowed people to maintain fields in several different districts. There were two main domains of activity carried out at these more distant sites: concealed opium cultivation⁵⁴ and cattle-herding.

As is common in the interdiction of production, small holders had responded by breaking up and extending their cultivation to smaller, hidden, and more distant sites, a sort of “geographical substitution” (Tullis 1995:110-111). In northern Thailand, experts referred to this as a balloon effect, as when a partially filled balloon is squeezed between the fingers. In Revealed River, some farmers planted fields over the border in Burma. There were also patches of land north and west of the village that were not well mapped by the RFD, and a number of small opium fields were reported to be planted there. Until recently, Revealed River households had managed

⁵³ This strategy was practicable as all rituals are set by a lunar calendar. It was inherently flexible and even in the remembered past there was the potential for local divergence. Normally, all of the senior men of the neighborhood would have agreed to the time for the New Year celebration. In this case, the economic exigencies of late payment served as good motive for setting an alternate date. That it did not coordinate with celebrations at Revealed River was of little concern, as that village had been formed after a feud with the Laoyipha lineage (that of the headman) drove these families out of Revealed River. The head of the new village had formerly been the servitor of the Village Guardian Spirit and had the ritual authority to claim his interpretation of the calendar to be legitimate. As will be seen later, this event was also interpreted as the desire of the village to attract as many marriageable young men as possible to their celebrations.

⁵⁴ As farmers hid opium from the gaze of the state, it was also hidden from the inquiries of the researcher. Evidence for opium cultivation was often indirect – it could rarely be verified, at least not without the risk of endangering the villagers (and, quite frankly, myself). However, indirect information was available. This was often in the sub rosa comments of those who wanted to get some one else in trouble (not the best source of information) or, ideally, of those who genuinely want to explain how things are. In my case, it became part of an ongoing discourse of arguing for the return of opium as the only crop that gave people any hope of security and economic stability.

to plant small fields closer to the village and avoid prosecution by claiming personal use if caught, but the presence of the soldiers and, later, the expulsion of the opium users had put an end to that. In Pang Khum in the 1980s, households kept distant fields in Pai district (up the road a bit from the entrance to Thirty Thousand) (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992:203). Ideally, a married son and his wife were sent to work such fields. Throughout the agricultural season in Revealed River, young and middle-aged men would disappear for a week or more, and I was told they had gone to look after such distant fields. Not all distant fields were opium fields, by the way; acquiring land in a variety of places was a means of securing future land rights against the possibility that they would be forcibly removed from Revealed River as well as a strategy to spread the risk of crop failure given the sometimes extreme variation in weather conditions among different ecozones in the mountains.

Elsewhere, levels of income provided indirect evidence of opium cultivation. Households in an upland village Nam Long Mae Hong Son, 1989-1990) had farm incomes below subsistence. Other sources indicated 600 *rai*⁵⁵ under opium cultivation. When the income for this was included, the “new” average income level for low-yield farmers rose to a level very close to the levels of income needed for subsistence (2,000 *baht*). On average, very little opium was needed to achieve subsistence – 0.7 *rai* (0.11 ha.) of opium were sufficient. Poor households needed 1.66 *rai*; it was likely that poor farming households were far more likely to cultivate opium (Salzer 1993:81). This corresponds with my observations; poorer households tended to travel much further, even as far as Burma, to cultivate supplementary fields. Specific size of fields were indeterminable. Lisu referred to their land holdings as “plots” of land without regard to size.

The other element in centripetal tendencies in land use was in cattle raising. While a few cattle had been kept in earlier times, cattle raising had expanded considerably in Revealed River. Cattle served as a capital reserve, a sort of insurance substitute that could be liquidated to cover unexpected costs. Some farmers had as many as 40 head of cattle. This was a point of

⁵⁵ One *rai* equaled 1,500 square meters; 2.53 *rai* equals one acre.

contention with the RFD, however. While initially suggested as a good income supplement that was environmentally sound, the RFD soon realized that herds of cattle devastated their reforestation projects and banned cattle herding. A few cattle were kept in the forests around the village, but not many. Larger herds were kept in regions outside of the Project's jurisdiction, such as Pai (northwest of the village) and along the path east down to Chiang Dao. Sometimes young men watched over the herds, but in most cases, Lahu laborers were hired or agistment arrangements made with a poor Lahu village just outside of the Project's control. In Pang Khum, there was an agistment system between the Lisu and Karen, and sometimes between Lisu and lowland Khon Mueang (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992). Such herds were a sizable investment and a potentially valuable form of capital accumulation. Large numbers of cattle might be sold for bridewealth for a son. The risks were, of course, insecurity of land tenure for pasture land, cattle disappearing due to theft or poor management, and disease.

Summary

The main difference between the agricultural economy of 1990s Revealed River Village and those villages observed in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the end of opium cultivation as it had existed then in northern Thailand. Opium had not completely disappeared, but it did not exist as in the earlier part of the twentieth century in northern Thailand. It could only be planted in distant, small, hidden fields or over the border in Burma. Despite the hopes of international drug interdiction programs, no one replacement crop had arisen. It is doubtful that opium is replaceable by any other crop, no matter how high value (Salzer 1993:231). Rather, households experimented with a plethora of cash crops, only one of which fulfilled the time gap in the agricultural cycle left by opium (barley) and none of which fulfilled either its economic or ecological advantages. All required significant capital inputs (fertilizer, pesticide, fungicide, or irrigation) for growing. All required capital to take advantage of markets (trucks). All depended on good infrastructure (roads) for transport in order to sell their crops. All required sophisticated

knowledge of a complex and virtually unknowable market and the skill to negotiate with Thai middlemen. In this context, the emphasis within households on educating their children made sense. The disaggregation of land holdings further increased the opportunity costs of production. This meant that households had to find the labor to go off to distant fields or pastures for a week at a time.

Crops were far more expensive to produce and the means of production were not open to everyone due to the labor and capital investments needed. Commercial farming systems often seriously widened social and economic disparities among farmers because of differentials in ability to invest capital and withstand risk. Poorer households could not afford a failed or unprofitable crop for even one year, especially if they took out loans to buy the seeds and chemical inputs needed (Cuc, Gillogly and Rambo 1990; Van Keer *et al.* 1998:10). That is, risks increased due to unpredictable production and markets and the high investments required, and these risks fell on households inequitably; wealthier households could weather poor production and low market prices because they had enough resources to cover the costs of the high investments for a year. Similarly, access to labor, particularly relatively specialized labor in terms of driving and maintaining trucks, knowing how to plant new crops, and negotiating in the markets, was not equitably distributed across households. Those households with enough adult or near-adult men had a significant advantage.

What land was available was over-used and could not support upland dry rice sufficient for household subsistence. Because subsistence was more difficult to achieve, households had become even more dependent on markets, while at the same time they had to depend on less ecologically and economically reliable cash crops. The irony of this was that households had become increasingly dependent on the market for subsistence at a time when they had to rely on crops that were not as high-value/unit of weight as was opium. Farmers increased production of cash crops to make up the difference, resulting in further over-use of land in many parts of northern Thailand. Although over-use in Revealed River Village was limited due to Project

restrictions, households with the means had extended their cultivation out to areas beyond the limits of the Project.

Land Tenure

Land had once been a free resource and the capital investment for agriculture was small. This underlay the profound egalitarianism of Lisu society. Anyone who wanted to establish an independent, autonomous household had only to work – go out and clear land, plant crops, and harvest them. Alternately, they could obtain fallowed or previously cleared land for use by presenting a bottle of liquor to the “owner” of the land, the person who had cleared it. However, given migration patterns, it was not common to have to use fallow lands. In such a context, there was no dependency or inheritance of significant resources within households or kin groups. All of this changed with the insertion of state control into the uplands.

Forestry Policy and Planning

By the 1990s, the Royal Forest Department (RFD) controlled huge swathes of land throughout the mountains of the north. All along the roads were RFD signs declaring their control of an area. Since World War II, the story of forests had been one of progressive alienation of rural land by the state. In 1941, the Forest Act declared certain forested lands to be state land without regard for existing villages. The Land Code Act of 1954 further asserted state control over the uplands. For mountain villages, only paddy fields were potentially recognized as being privately owned, but the owners had to request recognition. Two years later, the Ministry of the Interior extended state control when it declared that land within 40 meters of the foot of a hill was considered state land and could not be used. In all of these cases, mountain peoples were unaware of such laws or unable to navigate the bureaucracy for land title if they did understand, and so most never requested recognition. The process of land alienation proceeded further with the Reserved Forest Act of 1964, which separated uplanders from the control of forest resources

in favor of the state. This act gave the government control over resources that it had never controlled before, despite the long-term management of forests by local communities (Ganjanaphan 1987; Wun'Gaeo 1992:19).

The National Forest Reserves Act of 1964 initiated a Forest Reserves Classification system restricting agriculture and illegal logging, but also exploitation of items collected in the forest. The 1968 National Reserved Forests Act detailed punishments for destruction of forest. For instance, cutting trees on more than 25 *rai* or causing damage to a water source or stream could result in imprisonment of one to seven years plus a fine of between five and fifty thousand *baht* (Cooper 1984:260). The schedule of crime and punishment was devastating to a small farmer who depended on swiddening for his livelihood. Upland minority people have been jailed for this crime as they have for planting opium or transporting heroin. By 1985, the Forest Reserves Classification (including Watershed Classifications) was completed. Forty-two percent of Thailand's land area was allocated to the forest reserves class; since by 1990, nearly 70% of Thailand's remaining forests were in the north, due to its inaccessibility, restrictions fell heavily on farmers there. By 1988, the Royal Forestry Department claimed 31 wild life sanctuaries (2,470,054 ha) and 22 parks (1,136,543.5 ha) existed, pending approval. If the National Forestry Policy were fully implemented, then 1,048,566 ha more would be designated as conservation forests (Wun'Gaeo 1992:14).

The Watershed Classifications further determined restrictions on land according to slope, land form, elevation, soil, geology and forest cover. Land with 30% slope or over was classified as Class 1A Watershed land, on which no settlement or exploitation of forest products whatsoever was to take place. In northern Thailand, in the basin of four tributary rivers, 27% of land was classified as Class 1A Watershed. Class 1A Watershed land is considered headwater source land, with high elevations and steep slopes that were to be kept under permanent forest cover; Class 1B land was a subclass for areas already partially cleared for cultivation (Royal Forest Department 1993:182). The effect was to further restrict land available to upland minority people

and most upland farmers were suddenly classified as illegal settlers. By the early 1990's it was estimated that 10-12 million persons, equivalent to 25% of the rural population in Thailand, were living on land that was classified as forest reserves (Phongpaichit and Baker 1999:63). Forcible removal had of upland ethnic minority peoples had occurred (Kammerer 1988; Eudey 1989; Lohmann 1999).

These were meant to protect the nation's water supply; the northern uplands are particularly important to agriculture in the Central Plains as the main four tributaries of the Chao Phraya River originate there. However, little effort was made to correlate the classification with actual land-use or topographic characteristics (Phongpaichit and Baker 1999:62). In particular, the maps used were of a very broad scale, so that the entire north was classified Class 1A Watershed without regard for the numerous gentler slopes and valleys along streams, creeks and rivers, that could be cultivated without endangering the watershed (Horst Weyerhauser, 1993, personal communication).

A former director of the Hill Tribes Research Center wrote that "the principle hill tribe problem is deforestation and Government policy rooted in this" (Bhruksasri 1981). In fact, deforestation was more rapid in the Northeast and other regions than it was in the North, and much deforestation was due to illegal timbering by businesses, not swiddening by mountain peoples (see table in Bhruksasri 1981). Nevertheless, the director accepted the necessity of relocation of populations in accordance with the Watershed Classifications. Upland minority peoples such as the Lisu continued to be blamed as the primary culprits in deforestation and downstream flooding and siltation.

Consequences for Land Tenure in Revealed River Village

Projects throughout the mountains that had once focused on opium interdiction began to focus on watershed conservation in the 1980s. Throughout northern Thailand, upland ethnic minorities were declared squatters as the mountains were “enclosed” by the Royal Forestry Department. They could not obtain title deeds for the land they cultivated and lived on; they could not legally sell the land, although land often was sold to ‘influential persons’; and they could not use the land as collateral for loans that would be necessary for intensifying agricultural production. Land was no longer free and the Lisu of the Thirty Thousand cluster were illegal residents on the land.

The Project itself, a Joint UN/Thai Program project, had developed unique ways of dealing with the problems of uplanders. It was so successful that it was taken as a model for the *Roh Foh Toh* (Accelerated Watershed Forest Rehabilitation) regional comprehensive program for watershed management. The Project attempted to bring about substantial changes in the adaptive strategies of the uplanders under its control, both in terms of ending opium cultivation and by addressing the severe social and environmental problems these changes caused. It subsidized the agricultural transition and protected ‘their’ villagers from eviction (which had happened over the years to other farmers in both the north and the northeast; one case is described in Eudey 1989). Nevertheless, the combination of destruction of the economic base of Lisu society and the restriction of access to land had made land a scarce resource for Revealed River and other Thirty Thousand villagers.

The Lisu in northern Thailand had practiced a very long fallow. This means that they required at least eight times as much land as was actually under cultivation to maintain sustainability and maintain rice production levels (Van Keer *et al.* 1998:45-49). To give an idea of the area of land required, the average farmer in Nam Long required more than 100-150 *rai* to accommodate a seven to ten year fallow (Salzer 1993:130), albeit with larger households. Lisu in

northern Thailand tended to be “pioneering” swiddeners, defined as opening new lands; but what it meant in practice was that they did not consistently re-use their own fallow lands.

But the first lands to be taken over by the RFD tended to be fallow fields. In RFD terms, this was degraded land, spoiled by the wasteful cultivation practices of the hill tribes, and they were there to save and rehabilitate it by reforestation, most often planting pine plantations. Lisu farmers in the Thirty Thousand cluster complained deeply about having had fallow land reforested to pine plantations by the RFD. Farmers’ categories of land and those of land-use planners can differ considerably (Perz and Walker 2002). In this case, government land policy thwarted local land use planning. What a Lisu farmer categorized as fallow land for future use was defined by the RFD as degraded land and thus available and appropriate for reforestation. The conflict contributed to overuse of land as farmers attempted to maintain control of land by working it far past when they judged it ready to be fallowed. This likely accounts for the sense RFD and Project personnel had that Lisu were constitutional liars in claiming land. This was a point of violent conflict between farmers and RFD officials in the early days of watershed development projects in northern Thailand (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992:213; Tan-Kim-Yong, Limchoowong and Gillogly 1994).

One of the great advances of the Project was to recognize that upland farmers needed land. As Uraivan Tan-Kim-Yong has put it, conflict arose over different strategies, goals, and forms of discourse. Foresters prioritized trees; upland farmers saw land on which they could grow crops to feed their families (Tan-Kim-Yong 1992). The founder of the Project recognized the validity of farmers’ needs and set about to help create an agricultural system that would allow them to stay on restricted land. One of the policies of the Project was to allocate land to each household – they were to be allowed 15 *rai*, a little less than 6 acres, and learn how to live sustainably on this amount of land by planting perennial crops. The 15 *rai* limit had not yet been enforced at the time of my research, and some staff were hazy about the exact amount when I questioned them about it, but the potential land limits were constantly talked about by agents of

the Project in meetings with villagers and they monitored villagers' farm plots frequently, trying to forbid villagers from opening any new land at all. Late one afternoon, riding into the village with a forestry/UN community organizer, we saw a small plot of trees cleared not far from the road. The CO was openly furious, unusual for a Thai, and as soon as we reached the village he leapt out of the car and marched straight to the culprits' house to yell at them. In this case, the household had gotten permission from another forestry official to clear that plot on the grounds that it had been their field in the past. But I also heard of other incidents in which a household had cleared a plot only to be 'discovered' by forestry officials and forced to abandon it. For forestry officials, it was always about catching the Lisu villagers in a lie about their land use. For the villagers, it was about using land to which they believed they had a right under pre-existing Lisu tenure systems. There was a continuous cat-and-mouse game going on as farmers attempted to evade Project scrutiny and establish new fields. The issue of land holdings was so politicized that I was unable to measure household land resources. In addition, the scattering of household plots across the landscape of northern Thailand made such quantification unfeasible. However, general information on who was land poor or land rich was frequently discussed by villagers and Project personnel.

While Project policy was to involve villagers more closely in such land use decisions, in fact the centralized, Bangkok-focused nature of policy development meant that Lisu did not feel that they were listened to or had any power to influence such decisions. With the use of GIS, the RFD hoped to make an end-run around the participation of upland farmers. The goal of the RFD was to preserve or rehabilitate watershed forests, which meant preserving or replacing forest cover on ridges, and if a particular Lisu household tended to have their fields in such locations, they lost the fields. In short, rights to land access became state controlled. The end effect, and unintended consequence, of state land policies toward mountain forests resulted in a bias toward founding families in Revealed River who had had a high number of productive laborers at the time the new land tenure system was concretized from usufruct by labor to a closer approximation of

ownership and permanence. As Perz and Walker point out, foresters and land use planners rarely consider the role of “household life cycle” in planning (Perz and Walker 2002).

Lisu households in Revealed River therefore undertook a number of strategies to increase their land holdings and keeping access to them. Some households with sufficient labor acquired land in other districts, outside of the Project’s boundaries and in areas in which there were no reserved forests. Some bought, others used kin ties. Some had gone so far as to open lands in Burma, although this was highly risky given the state of constant warfare that exists there. While there was no outright conflict over control of land, those wealthy in land attempted to horde and hide it as much as possible. This was not only because of their needs for land in the present time, but because of their concerns about the future of their children’s households.

Tensions arose in other ways, however. One day a 19 year old unmarried woman, Alema, looked down on Susati’s home garden with disgust. “That’s our land and he took it,” she said, “if he didn’t have it, we wouldn’t have to walk so far to our fields and we could have all those fruit trees because of the water.” According to her, her father had opened that land when he first came to the village but eventually abandoned it in part because it was too close to the village and prone to the depredations of livestock, which was still a point of much conflict.

The model advocated by the Project was of small, permanent home gardens. Home gardens, common in densely-populated parts of Southeast Asia, were multi-layered plantings of fruit trees, bushes, and herbs, watered by a pond and with pigs penned above the pond where their feces would feed fish (Everett, Gillogly and Rambo 1990). In mainland Southeast Asia, this was most common in heavily Chinese influenced areas. Susati was ethnic Chinese and perhaps for that reason adopted this form of agriculture very quickly. Alema’s family kept a lot of livestock, including a large herd of cattle, some of which were kept around the village. Alema’s family’s pigs, cattle, and chicken, never kept penned, often broke into Susati’s garden and ate his corn, causing much conflict between the two families. In such matters, Susati had the upper hand because of his superior connections with the Project – he was their model farmer whose garden

was displayed to visitors to the Project. But while Lisu conflict resolution practice would have been for the owner of the culprit animals to recompense the field owner for damage, Alema's household was able to argue successfully that no one had seen their cattle in the garden. However, the argument within Alema's family's household was that it was their land anyhow.

Particular types of land had become more valuable. Land near water sources allowed farmers to grow crops even in the dry season, particularly to keep fruit trees, for although fruit trees were often advocated as a form of community forestry ecologically appropriate to the mountains as they replicated the forest, the truth was that they required water throughout the year. In my reading of other development project reports, every 'model farm' mentioned was located near a water supply (*cf.* data in Van Keer *et al.* 1998:21). Whether a household had access to such land has had to do with how early they settled an area and the size of their family when they settled, as well as their agricultural practices at that time.

Land near the bottoms of slopes with good soil were also highly valued, both for their fertility and because the Project actively advocated farming in such low-slope valley bottoms as being less prone to erosion. Thus, a household that had control of such land was virtually guaranteed that they would not lose it. Revealed River Village was placed just above one such micro-valley and the bottom lands were heavily farmed. The owners tended to be the Chinese, however, as well as some of Headman Red's lineage. Kowboi's lineage did not have any such land, and nor did Headman Red's older brother or Headman Red himself. Thus, their land holdings were less secure and far more spread out. In such cases, political connections such as Headman Red's became important in maintaining land rights.

I want to note here a phenomenon particular to people's existence under the control of a government project. That is, many households attempted to keep at least one 'model farm' close in for display, but no matter how productive that garden they almost always kept other, far less approved, farms in other locations. Again, a similar example comes from a development report on the model farm of an Akha farmer in Chiang Rai. He had a beautiful, integrated, diversified

field and he hosted many visitors to learn from his farm. But he had another field on the other side of the mountain in an area known as “the cabbage valley,” where he grew cabbages in a less ecologically perfect but more financially rewarding fashion (Van Keer *et al.* 1998:21). Susati’s garden was also renowned and countless “development picnickers” visited it. But the fact was that Susati could not sustain his family on that garden. He was stubborn in refusing to undertake any unapproved farming practices elsewhere. In essence, he supplemented his family’s income by constantly going on “seminar,” attending workshops and conferences held by the RFD in which he spoke to other farmers about his agricultural practices. He was paid for this, and much of his household’s food was purchased in town while he was on these trips.

The new agroecosystem as put into place by the Project did not provide subsistence for upland households during the time I was there. The transition to a new form of agriculture based on both expunging of opium and restriction of access to mountain lands was delicate and demanding. The Lisu of Revealed River recognized the inherent contradictions in a system dependent on producing for the market induced by a Project whose philosophy advocated self-subsistence. From their point of view of everyday practical experience, they were more dependent on markets than under the opium economy, and their household’s subsistence far more tenuous than the “bad old days” formed by the Project’s depiction of the past. Primary among these concerns was, always, getting enough land – not only for themselves but for their children’s future. The difficulty of getting land for their children’s future households was a constant topic of conversation even for parents with children nowhere near the age of marriage. As Kowboi told me, “We have enough land for now, *ajarn* (professor), but there’s nothing for our children. How are they going to get food? How are they going to work?” I heard this time again from even unmarried young adults in the village. They saw the Project’s proposed 15 *rai* per household land allocation as untenable, especially in the context of the RFD and Project personnel’s continued failure to recognize the Lisu land tenure system, in which the ownership of an abandoned field remained with the household that had cleared and most recently cropped it. The Project also

failed to recognize the nature of the developmental cycle of the household; they shrugged off questions about future land allocations. All of this made household planning very difficult, and no household could guarantee from year to year that they would have access to enough land, much less be able to help newly-married couples set up their own household and fields. All had to be approved by Project personnel.

Inter-Generational Land Transfers and Intra-Household Relationships

Land constraints had made inheritance significant in household strategies and everyday discourse. Getting land to establish a new household took far more strategizing in 1990s Revealed River Village. Potential new households became more dependent on their parents' help. At some point in the near future, they understood, no household would be allowed to open new land and each household would be required to provide for new households from existing parcels.

These uncertainties about the availability of land shifted the significance of inter-generational wealth transfers, particularly in regard to land. In the past, inter-generational transfer of wealth (not inheritance) occurred at two points. One was at marriage in the payment of bridewealth on behalf of sons or gifts of silver jewelry to daughters. The other was when the married couple, with one or two young children, moved into their own house, usually when a younger brother married. The parents and resident siblings helped in building the house and generally had contributed labor in developing the fields that would sustain the new household. This happened with each adult child in turn, but the youngest son stayed on with his parents. Upon the death of his father, the youngest son inherited the household's land and whatever silver rupees remained from previous wealth transfers to siblings in marriage prestations (Hutheesing 1990a:165); the groom's mother would stay on in the household of her youngest son and his wife until her death. Due to field rotation and migration, the fields a son 'inherited' from his parents were not part of an accumulated household stock; rather, the youngest son, his wife, and children,

were likely to have opened and worked those fields themselves, even if they were considered the fields belonging to the head of the household (the father). Inheritance, therefore, had been relatively insubstantial and would not have given the youngest son a significant advantage over his siblings.

By the 1990s, the possibility of inheritance had gained new significance. With land at a premium and people staying not only in the same village but re-using the same fields, land became a significant source of wealth and inheriting his parents' households' land gave the youngest son a significant advantage in setting up an independent household capable of fulfilling its social obligations and establishing reputation. Specific collateral consequences for relationships between older and younger brothers arose out of this situation.

Lisu households were organized on an ideology of seniority, leading to a structurally formed tension between oB and yB. An elder brother was to be obeyed and respected, and even stood *in loco parentis* when the father was away, to be obeyed in the same way as the father (Lewis and Lewis 1984:258). In turn, the oB was to help and care for his yB; Dessaint recounts the great anger when a man went to his oB for help and was denied. This precipitated the yB's decision to migrate out of the village (Dessaint 1972a:37). The structure of sibling seniority was carried over to the wives of brothers. The wife of the yB was expected to kowtow to the wife of the oB and speak respectfully toward her. The wife of the youngest brother married was assigned the dirtiest drudge-work, including washing the corpse of the mother-in-law (Hutheesing 1990a:125, 160). The elder brother held the formal authority; but countervailing principles of this dynamic are illustrated in a myth recounted by Maitra for Lisu in northeastern India (recent migrants from northern Burma).

The oB was weak, his wife gave birth every year, and he was poor. His yB, an expert hunter and cultivator who helped others with labor and money, often spoke badly of his oB to everyone who would listen. He was rebuked for this by, in turn, the headman, an old woman, and a young man in the village. The yB decided to test his oB. He invited a friend and his oB to hunt with him, but promised only the friend some meat. The yB hunted a bear, killed it, smeared himself with its blood, and lay on the forest floor as if dead. The friend came and only expressed anger that there was nothing to eat. His oB came and cried for him. At this proof of his

brother's loyalty, the yB jumped up and embraced his brother, and from that time forward they lived together peacefully and cooperatively, the yB respecting and helping his oB in all things (Maitra 1993:68-69).⁵⁶

From the perspective taken here, the tension here arose not from competition over the resources of the natal household, but were inherent in disjunction created by the expectations of seniority, each person's right to autonomy, and the progression of the household developmental cycle. An older brother has the authority of age, but having started a family before his younger brother faces the constraints of a young family with children to feed. He can not fully meet the expectations of repute. The younger brother, with fewer obligations, has the resources to put into building social relationships. Even so, his contempt for his brother goes against Lisu social mores. It is a cautionary tale, for he learns that his older brother is more loyal to him than a friend, and he learns to respect the older brother's authority.

The formal structure of Lisu kinship ideology and expected behavior created an inherent conflictual tendency for those in the social positions of oB and yB, given the ideology of age hierarchy and countervailing principle of autonomy, but under the opium economy the structural contradictions of age hierarchy/autonomy and its expression in the interests of older and younger brothers had had few practical consequences since brothers might well not have lived with, or even near, each other. Outright tension was only likely to come into play in particular cases, such as the death of the father and the eldest son taking on the father's role toward unmarried younger brothers. In such cases, younger sons were likely to complain of their older brother's unwillingness to take on the responsibility of providing bridewealth or otherwise helping them to achieve their own household. Myths and legends spoke of these dynamics, particularly the closeness of an elder and younger brother destroyed through rivalry over a marriage (*cf.* Rose and Brown 1911:253). In fact, if the parents died before the youngest son was married, the elder

⁵⁶ Some might argue that Maitra's data are inappropriate here in because these people are missionized Black Lisu living in India. However, I found his work on kinship relations in keeping with other literature on kin relations in the household and with my own observations of relationships between oB and yB. Furthermore, he recounts a series of myths and stories that illustrate kin relations more succinctly than other sources.

brothers were likely to take the resources of the parental household. Younger sons complained about their elder brothers not looking after them properly or helping them with bridewealth in the absence of the parents (Maitra 1988; Maitra 1993) and an older brother who was aggressive in asserting his position could inherit the major part of the deceased household's silver and other wealth (Dessaint 1972a:131). Headman Red, for instance, had a young brother, but when their father died, Red took over the household and its resources, portioning out resources to his younger brothers. One of these brothers was forthrightly uninterested in power; the youngest was too young to be married and thus to manage a household himself. However, Red apparently portioned out the household resources generously, as neither younger brother ever complained and they were, in fact, close allies to him in all public and economic undertakings.

With changes in land tenure, the balance of power of the two positions – the ideological power of the authority of the elder brother with relatively little power to control vs. the potential material advantage of the youngest brother – had shifted toward the younger brother. This was evidenced in Revealed River by the fact that all of the young men born in to the village (i.e., not sons-in-law) who had disappeared turned out, on examination, to be elder brothers, lost to drugs or the heroin trade. This can be understood in part through oB/yB dynamics. The pressures on oBs in setting up a new household were greater in that they did not have the advantages of potential inheritance access to land and capital that the youngest brother did. However, there was an element of cyclical household developmental time here. Older brothers were put into the pressures of establishing an autonomous household before younger brothers. As will be discussed in the next section, young households faced great difficulties in providing subsistence for their families. Under the opium economy, households with inadequate labor were able to compensate in part through growing opium and hiring cheap labor from opium addicts in other ethnic groups (Durrenberger 1976c:636-640; Durrenberger 1983b:221-224). They still faced this impetus in the 1990s (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992; Salzer 1993:74), but faced much greater risks of having, at the least, fields destroyed, and at worst, being arrested. Still worse, as

opium production in northern Thailand had decreased, heroin trafficking out of Burma had taken its place. Many Lisu young men became involved as transporters of heroin as an alternative to opium production in order to supplement insufficient household income (Hutheesing 1999). They thus faced greater risks from addiction to heroin or incarceration for life. In either case, they faded away from public view, never fulfilling the cultural expectations of household reputé and leaving their wife and children far poorer than a household in which the father was the head of household. Younger brothers, when they did mention the invisible older brother, spoke of them off-handedly, with contempt.

The contradictions and ambiguities in the role of brothers, constituted through layers of cultural meaning, were transformed but not changed – that is, the same initial dynamics gave rise to different consequences. The idea role of oB as superior to yB had not changed, but as oBs were unable to fulfill cultural expectations, the result was conditions in which yBs had structured advantage in access to the resources of the parental household. This was particularly true of the youngest brother, if he was married (by Lisu definition an adult) and lived in his father's household at his father's death. This was the effect of historical time on the cyclical time of the household developmental cycle and the socially constructed positions of people in the household (yB, oB, parents, children) (*cf.* Chelcea 2003; Heald 1991); the intersection of the cycling of people in and out of roles was transformed by the historical forces of international drug policy and national watershed conservation.

Modern Children, Traditional Parents, and Continued Loyalty in Post-Opium Society

Despite the potentially disjunctive effects of schooling in relations between parents and children, there still existed complementarity in their interests – they shared goals for subsistence and reputé, and worked together to achieve them. The issue of access to land might have been one of the reasons that children saw their interests as intertwined with those of their parents despite education and higher levels of assimilation to Thai culture. They felt dependent on their

parents for access to land since it was increasingly unlikely they would be able to find a new place to open land. Migration was not an easy option not only because the RFD controlled the opening of land throughout the north, but also because the Ministry of the Interior restricted the opening of new villages. There was no place else to go. This effect fell on all sons, and therefore young women who hoped to marry them.

Even though a younger son might have had a slight advantage, in fact fathers attempted to provide for all of their sons. In the case of a powerful father, a good manager, a good farmer, one with land, and therefore authority, all of his sons might stay close to him. Kowboi's family illustrated this. Although his two older sons had their own households, his daughters-in-law came to his house first on return from the fields and I frequently saw his sons take instruction from him. I suspect that those fathers with managerial intelligence and good resources commanded greater loyalty from their children. The power relations within a household with land would give the parents leverage over the children's behavior, especially their departure from the parental household, and thus would give the parents more control over their children's labor and for a longer period of time (Cain 1978:435). For instance, a model farmer in a Lahu village in Chiang Mai Province had six large pieces of favorable agricultural land, three with a water supply. All of his adult children continued to live with him and help him in his fields, unlike the typical pattern there (*cf.* data in Van Keer *et al.* 1998:21). Niches sufficient to guarantee the survival of the family, an economic position, could be inherited, and this gave parents far more control over their offspring than those without resources worth inheriting (Fertig 2003). Another strategy to provide for sons was to allocate specialized roles to them. Among Headman Red's brothers, this was very clear. The oldest son, the less "successful" one, was a shaman (actually, so was Kowboi's oldest son). Red was the headman; the next younger brother the store owner and middleman; and the youngest brother the truck driver. Similar strategies were followed in Pang Khum in households with sufficient resources to do so (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992). The source of this capital was wealth accumulated in the opium economy.

The parental generation's land holdings created relationships of dependency between the child and his parents in ways that had not held under the opium economy. Nevertheless, the increased strength of the household head can not be seen simply as a materialist revision of kinship relations. The sheer accumulation of inheritable items did not cause an increased expression of hierarchical relations within the family, although that was the result. That structure was already in place even in the most egalitarian periods of Lisu society in the opium economy. Inter-generational hierarchy had not been part of everyday practice outside of the household because of the nature of the opium economy, the conditions of northern Thailand as a borderland, and global political structures. It had been possible to resolve conflict by leaving and setting up a self-sufficient, autonomous household (Dessaint 1972b; Durrenberger 1976b). The expression of contradictory dynamics of complementary roles and competition for resources within the household varied with the economic conditions in which people in the household worked. The new political economy re-emphasized prior hierarchical authority structures. The restoration of age-based authority structures was partly a matter of adaptation to current conditions, but that this adaptation existed at all as a possibility was because of the already existing age-based hierarchy and relations of authority and respect, rights and obligations. Utilitarian self-interest was involved – sons seeking access to land – but that self-interest was enacted in frames of culturally constructed goals such as repute, the desire to establish an autonomous household, and the lack of other opportunities.⁵⁷

Thus historically situated material conditions interacted with the norms of behavior.

Variations in the ways relations between brothers or fathers and sons were manifested arose out

⁵⁷ I can not say with certainty what will happen to households without adequate land to provide for their adult sons. In Revealed River, most of the households without sufficient land were still relatively young, that is at the beginning of the household life cycle, and so had no sons of marriageable age. Evidence from See-the-Tiger Village indicates that these young men became involved in the heroin trade. If successful, they could stay in the village and marry with much repute; if unsuccessful, they faded away into the underworld of addiction, jail, and the drug trade (Hutheesing 1999). In other cases, households moved in search of better economic conditions. This point will be discussed further in the following chapter on marriage.

of existing structural contradictions in social relationships and the possibilities for resolving them; the possibility for transformation was inherent in the structure (Kelly 1977). The structures of relationships were full of overlapping complexities and contradictions and in exercising agency people made use of ambiguities in order to achieve culturally appropriate goals given the opportunities and constraints of the economic conditions available. People carried on in their routine strategizing without attempting to transform the system, but change emerged. Certainly there was an element of contestation and manipulation of ambiguities as actors strived to position themselves competitively, for instance, as oBs and yBs competed (albeit *sub rosa*) for access to the resources of the parental household. The possibility for this strategizing arises out of the contradictions of kinship relations, for instance of oB to yB or F to S. The consequences of their strategizing has had different results in different conditions.

People exercised agency in keeping with cultural or generative principles and historically obtained structural realities (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979). Their ability to take chances or to act in response to others' actions and intentions or to assert agency – that is, to strategize – occurred within the frames of power and cultural meaning as well as social relationships (Foucault 1978; Patel 1999). The household was a knot of interests (Laslett 1984), but not just in a pragmatic sense. The logic of household dynamics and kin roles were formed in terms of shared ceremony, ritual, mutual obligations and respect. In continuing to work together for culturally constructed common goals, Lisu households actively reinforced those goals and their relationships to each other. Brothers' and fathers' relationships were altered, but the goals themselves, for instance achieving *myi³-do⁵*, were essentially unchanged. For instance, the relationship between brothers is laden with cultural meanings, some of which contradicted each other – a younger brother owed an older allegiance, but each man must seek his own reputation, first through establishing his own household by which he would become independent of his older brother's authority. This was paralleled in the structural position of brothers to each other in terms of the order in which each established his household and the way that the resources of the parental household devolved to

them. The older brother became an autonomous adult sooner than his younger brother, reinforcing the older brother's position of authority. With the changes in the local political economy, practical power shifted toward those younger brothers who would inherit the father's land when they took over the household at his demise or deterioration. This made it more likely that the younger brother would be able to become a man of repute as he would have resources that the older brother lacked. So the anterior authority of the older brother was undercut. But this would be perceived as a lack of repute, whether because of the lack of work or just a bad fate. It could not be seen as a consequence of the structural positions of brothers from this cultural frame.

Children's adherence to parents' rule in the household was in some sense a pragmatic strategy for their own future self-interest. Despite their structurally constructed different interests and the heterogeneity of those interests *within* the household, children tended to publicly adhere to common household interests by acceding to their parents' wishes, thereby upholding household repute. From this point of view, the actions of individual actors served, in turn, to reinforce the power structures of the household (Shunnaq 1997) and, as we will see, the kinship structure (Al-Haj 1995); meaning and power inhered in the kinship structure and individuals strategized within that. Nevertheless, transformations occurred in elements of the kinship structure as unintended consequences of this strategizing. These were the effect of historical time on the cyclical time of the household developmental cycle and the interests of people in the household (yB, oB, parents, children) (*cf.* Chelcea 2003; Heald 1991); the intersection of the cycling of people in and out of roles was transformed by the historical forces of international drug policy and national watershed conservation.

Labor: Household Dynamics and Agricultural Production

In the opium economy of northern Thailand, the Lisu household was the locus of allocation of labor as well as distribution of the fruits of labor. In this, household composition was

an essential element of the mode of production. The crops planted, how planted, and where, were dependent on the people available for labor in the household. Each household had access to the means of production: tools, seeds, and especially land. Labor was the main constraint on production in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia; a household's available labor limited productivity of the household and the way to expand production was to increase labor inputs (Van Roy 1971; Dessaint 1972a:92), although different ethnic groups in northern Thailand defined the household and controlled household labor in culturally specific ways (Miles 1972a; Jonsson 2001a). Given the formation and composition of Lisu households, the key barrier to expansion of production in the opium economy had been the demographic or developmental cycle of the household.

The transformation of the agricultural production system had placed stresses on household labor management in historically specific ways. As crops changed, so had the labor requirements and the ability of households to meet the demands of making a living; this had consequences for social relationships as members of households strategized to survive, and to survive as reputable Lisu. Those who had been wealthy in the opium economy system at the time of the transition in the agricultural economy in the mid- to late 1980s – mature households with significant productive labor and opium profits – had had a considerable advantage as they had had access to capital at a critical time in the conjunction of household development and historical agricultural time, giving them the means to buy trucks, new seeds and inputs, and land in other districts. Furthermore, they had access to a surplus of household labor to accommodate the distances traveled among opium fields, cattle herds, and local fields (*cf.* Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992 for Pang Khum).

Because labor was the main constraint and most labor was household based, we need to understand how household composition affected labor and production and understand the permutations of household composition in regard to labor. In order to understand the precise nature of these changes, we must examine the household in the context of its developmental cycle, the ways in which composition of the household changed in a regular fashion over time.

However, the Chayanov curve of productivity (discussed below) and drudgery has also proven significant in understanding strategies regarding the domain of productivity.

Household Development Cycles and the Chayanov Curve

Households are not static entities. That there is no single form of household even within small communities is due to the orderly, cyclical development of households over time as individuals are born, mature, marry, establish households, have children, age, and die. That is, households have a time factor; they exist over a “stretch of time,” so that “the facts of physical continuity and replacement are thus converted into the process of social reproduction” (Fortes 1958:1). These processes are culturally formed and patterned – age at marriage, age at first birth, when a child is considered an adult, when a new household splits off from the natal household if at all, when goods are transferred from one household to the next. In this process, the individual life cycle is incorporated into the domestic and the jural domains of society (Fortes 1958:8). As such, the developmental cycle introduces the temporal factor into analysis of domestic groups. It also allows us to talk about social reproduction, that households continue to exhibit certain structural continuity despite considerable changes in personnel and in political and economic conditions in which the households exist, and gives us the means to consider the nature of these linkages. The developmental cycle (or demographic cycle) has become a key analytical concept in anthropological demography (Fortes 1958; Goody 1958; Cain 1978; Foster 1978a; Greenhalgh 1985; Heald 1991; Fricke 1994; Chelcea 2003).

Although Fortes analytically distinguished between social reproduction and economic production of the domestic group (Fortes 1958:9), in fact that distinction is not easily made (Sahlins 1972; Siskind 1978). The household developmental cycle is particularly significant to the study of a number of domains such as production and distribution, ecological relations, kinship and marriage. For the Lisu, the developmental cycle was a critical element in labor availability and therefore for household viability, resilience, wealth, resource use, and adaptation to political

and economic conditions. The work of Chayanov has been more widely used in economic and ecological anthropology when looking at age structure of households in relation to production. Chayanov, noting patterns in household size, life cycle, and amounts of land used among Russian peasants, suggested a consumption-needs/drudgery curve as a means of analyzing the strategies of peasant households. In this model, the intensity of production is related to the proportion of working to non-working members of the household; the higher the ratio of non-working consumers to producing members, the harder the producing members have to work to feed the household, but when the ratio is low, the members of the household need not work as hard or are able to put excess labor into non-subsistence activities. Chayanov assumed little or no migration; little or no hiring of labor; and limited agricultural inputs and markets. He focused on productive activities rather than distribution (Perz and Walker 2002:1012). While his hypothesis has not been upheld by data from peasant societies (Shanin 1990), it has proven useful in studies of “tribal” societies, where access to land is flexible and labor is the main constraint on production, starting with Sahlins’s use of it in Stone Age Economics (Sahlins 1972; Durrenberger and Tannenbaum 1992). The model has been particularly appealing to anthropologists as it considered peasant and later tribal economies from “below,” as household-centered and driven by internal demographic processes. This has allowed researchers to take a perspective in which farmers are active agents and the household an entity with shared economic interests and strategies. Household productive strategies can then be understood in terms of people’s own assessments of risks, drudgery, and optimal returns rather than as a maximization of surplus or profit, that is, in terms of local standards of aspirations and levels of work, risk assessment, and farming behavior in the face of economic change (Schrauwers 1995; Armstrong 1998; Hedican 2003). It has been useful in ecological research in studying land use practices because a key factor in land use decisions has been shown to be the position of households in the demographic cycle; these cyclical changes can widen or narrow the latitude farmers have in making land use decisions (Perz and

Walker 2002; Hedican 2003).⁵⁸ Household wealth can be related to the age structure of the household (Greenhalgh 1985). Chayanov's model allows us to account for differences in household wealth that are neither class-based and nor permanent over time. Because such socioeconomic differentiation does not bespeak permanent ownership of capital over generations, its transience allows for a great deal of egalitarianism in social interactions.

The household developmental cycle and the production/drudgery curve deal with very different phenomena and come from very different theoretical perspectives. Chayanov sought to explain the limits of and strategies for production in light of household demography; Fortes approaches household demographic processes as a means of understanding social reproduction and its relationship to kinship and domestic domains. Chayanov discusses different age structures; Fortes examines the development of the person to adulthood through domestic relations. Chayanov's model does not account for differences in the interests of the members of the household based on their position in the social structure. It also assumes a degree of homogeneity in the encompassing structure, for instance, that they are all peasants in the state system. Finally, it is temporally static; it treats differences in age structure as snapshots – the cycle is implicit but not incorporated into Chayanov's model. Fortes's developmental cycle is temporally dynamic. For instance, the cycle is a key heuristic device in explaining when and how new households are formed (Goody 1958; Fricke 1994), although Chayanov's model is more capable of operationalizing the economic ramifications of the household developmental cycle, a point ignored by Fortes.

⁵⁸ I think that it is potentially useful as a means of operationalizing carrying capacity. As Bayliss-Smith pointed out, those living in a system are often aware of when they are approaching the limits of their system's capacity through their experience of drudgery, the intensity of production, inability to produce sufficiency or increased occurrence of failure, although this can always vary through adjustment of needs and willingness to work. "As a result, there can be no absolute level of output for a given soil and crop type; output is relative to the intensity of input, which itself is culturally constrained. Most approaches to carrying capacity fail to accommodate this fact" (Bayliss-Smith 1980:63). Perceptions of drudgery can also be related to demographic processes such as occurrence of marriage and fertility rates, thereby providing a mechanism through which population adjusts itself to carrying capacity or levels of risk (Reyna 1975) without resorting to a functionalist explanation.

The developmental cycle is more culturally grounded than Chayanov's model. It deals with how a person is formed, and this is crucial to understanding the kinds of productive strategies Chayanov discusses if we use his model in non-western contexts because those strategies are motivated by these culturally-formed positions and goals. Fortes' model allows us to look at the different interests of members of domestic groups or the household and the dynamics of interaction in given the social structure in which it operates, for instance, kinship ideology (Goody 1958). Both models address motivations and strategies, but one from different directions. Chayanov addresses "the historical and cultural conditions of replenishment" and the gap between consumption or satisfaction and production or replenishment (Armstrong 1998:512), but how satisfaction is defined is historically and culturally situated, or drudgery. Doing without "food," for instance, means eating less culturally valued foods; not creating a surplus means not having the means to gain status as culturally defined. Fortes's model of the developmental cycle gives better access to that.

However, these analyses are complementary despite apparent differences in that they both note the importance of a household's life cycle in social and economic relations, and the demographic processes of the household as a key mechanism in social and economic reproduction and continuity. Given the primacy of the household as the unit of production in Lisu society, both analyses are useful here. And while the developmental cycle model takes more account of temporality, there is still a certain static quality to the concept of the developmental cycle, in keeping with British structural-functionalism, in that it implies unchanging repetition. However, change in the political and economic conditions in which the developmental cycle takes place brings about transformations. The cycle is re-created, but with unintended consequences when the strategies are carried out in changed conditions. The nature of the relationship between historical time and domestic developmental time (Heald 1991) is the point to be explored here. There is continuity, but what matters is that a recognized pattern existed in people's intentions and strategies, not in terms of psychological motivation but in planning for an imagined future. In part

because of this future planning, the household in Revealed River has demonstrated continuity despite profound changes in social and economic conditions; the household has proven a dynamic, flexible and primary locus of adaptation.

Labor in the Opium Economy

The amount of opium upland farmers could produce was limited only by the labor each household could invest in growing and harvesting poppies because there was a virtually infinite market for opium and land was free (Keen 1978:219-221). As such, the wealth or poverty of the household was affected by its composition. This potentially limited the amount of wealth available to a household and its ability to maintain equal reputé with its neighbors. The household developmental cycle of stem → nuclear → stem had implications for the availability of productive labor vis-a-vis consumption.

The dynamics of Lisu household composition and production strategies under the opium economy depended on the ratio of consumers to producers in the household. The more consumers there were in a household, the harder producers had to work to support the household and fulfill culturally constructed obligations such as sacrifices to the ancestors, reciprocating feasts, and paying for marriage. This is the consumer/worker ratio (c/w ratio), in which working adults are both consumers and producers but children and the elderly are considered to be only consumers. The number of consumers (all the people in the household) divided by the number of producers gives the c/w ratio (Durrenberger 1976c:638). A person became a full producer at some point in early adolescence; the specific age varies cross-culturally (Foster 1978a:432), but for Lisu this was generally at the age of 15 years. A high c/w ratio meant that workers in a household had to work harder in order to produce the household's needs (although, technically, it is a measure of drudgery) and not have been as well off (Durrenberger 1983b:221; Durrenberger and Tannenbaum 1992). Those with a low c/w ratio would have had surplus labor to put into

producing beyond subsistence that could be put into activities that gained reputé, such as feasts and marriage payments (Durrenberger 1976c:636-640; Durrenberger 1983b:221-224).

Labor constraints lay in the composition of the household. The main determinant of specific household composition was its stage in the developmental cycle, although Durrenberger does not discuss this *per se*. In effect, the household pursues its economic strategies differently given its stage in the developmental cycle. It also has consequences for household wealth. The household cycle has been demonstrated in other ethnographic studies to be a more important source of economic differentiation than was social class (Greenhalgh 1985:589; Hedin 2003). A young household was burdened by a higher number of non-productive consumers. Mature or stem households were able to open more land and plant more opium, the more labor intensive crop, thus gaining more surplus and more wealth. Dessaint found a direct positive relationship between the age of the male head of household and household crop yields in Evil Peaks because of multiple obligations of young husbands and wives: "A young household head is frequently called upon to help his father, father-in-law and elder brothers. As the household head comes into middle age, he himself will be able to call upon the service of his children and his sons-in-law" (Dessaint 1972a:109). Similarly, young wives owed labor to their mother, mother-in-law, sisters, and sisters-in-law. A mature household drew most heavily on the labor of daughters-in-law; her children's marriage was often the cue for the mother of the groom to partially retire from agricultural work (see also Hutheesing 1990a; Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992). One advantage accrued to a young household when a mother/mother-in-law lived with them. At the death of a head of household of a stem family, the widow stayed with her youngest married son and his family. A widow's interests were closely tied into her youngest married son's household. She has known since his childhood that her final years would be spent with him; she has likely been influential in his choice of a wife. This was her household so that even after her husband, the head of household, was replaced by the son, she had great management control (of

consumption, distribution) until she became too elderly to make an active contribution, whereupon she focused on caring for her grandchildren while their parents worked.

In systems where hiring labor was practical and households were not tied to a system of labor exchange, the effects of variability in household composition were greatly reduced and the effects of access to capital were increased (Foster 1978a:436). In Ban Lum, the c/w ratio was not correlated with household productivity because it was possible to hire labor with opium or the proceeds from opium. Households with high c/w ratios hired labor to supplement household labor, thus circumventing the labor constraints inherent in the developmental cycle and maintain their reputations and equal status with other households in the village. Labor exchange would not have met this need because for every unit of labor received one would have had to be given and such households did not have it to give. In the case of Ban Lum, Lisu hired Karen opium addicts from a nearby village. In fact, Lisu villages were usually established near Karen or Lahu villages, where labor was available (Durrenberger 1976c:36-640; Durrenberger 1983b:221-225). Such transient opium addict laborers have famously been referred to as "nowhere men" (Cooper 1984:105-111). It cost less to hire labor than the value of what they produced given the high value of opium, so that the household benefitted (Durrenberger 1983b:221-224). In fact, hired labor was intertwined with the opium economy to the extent that Cooper could find no means or reason for hired labor before the expansion of opium production in northern Thailand in the 1930's (Cooper 1984:102). Opium made the capital available to households to allow the hiring of labor. In this, Durrenberger made an important expansion to the Chayanov model, which originally assumed no hiring of outside labor (Perz and Walker 2002).

Under these social and economic conditions, differences in wealth among households were transient over time, linked to the household developmental cycle but frequently alleviated by hired labor. Any young household could achieve higher status as it matured and, conversely, any wealthy household could dwindle away over time as the young married couples moved out. But the ability to hire labor allowed individual households to circumvent the inequalitarian effects of the

developmental cycle of the household, making even young households remarkably independent. This was made possible by access to cash through opium. All households had equal access to the means of production, particularly land, and the labor constraint was surmountable and transient. The opium economy supported the egalitarianism of the social and political structures of Lisu villages.⁵⁹

Revealed River, 1992-1994

I argued in Chapter 2 that the introduction of opium as a cash crop put into place internal dynamics that resulted in Lisu status displays, early marriage, and migration. The end of the opium economy put into place a different set of trends that altered social and productive relations. The social structural dynamics of opium cultivation can be explicated by a consideration of Chayanovian and developmental cycle models to understand the specific consequences for social structure of the end of opium cultivation in northern Thailand. Spatial disaggregation, the loss of opium, and increased dependence on cash crops and fluctuating markets resulted in greater need for hired labor and less cash to hire it. Thus, the inequalities inherent in the household developmental cycle could no longer be ameliorated or externalized as effectively as in the opium economy.

As described in the section on agricultural production, the requirements for labor had changed in Revealed River, including new tasks such as marketing, negotiating, and transport, as well as attending regular meetings at the Forestry Development Center of the Project. This put strains on the ability of households to meet their labor needs. Those households that had the cash available depended on hired labor. Another strategy was specialization, such as assigning a specific role (truck driver) to an adult son (and also noted in Pang Khum by Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992). Yet another was to reduce the c/w ratio; the strategy of sending children to

⁵⁹ Although, as Ray Kelly (personal communication, April 2006) points out, the Karen opium addicts were not equal to Lisu. In that sense, inequality was externalized.

school was in part a response to the increased burdens of providing food for them, albeit at the cost of paying for uniforms and school books. But in many cases, the only alternative was to work harder, and much of this burden fell on women whose job was daily work in the fields.

Hiring labor had previously been possible because opium was convertible into cash to hire labor or, as was common, the laborers would be paid in balls of opium; since many were opium addicts, they simply worked to fulfill their addiction. This was no longer possible in Revealed River. Cash was not as readily available, both because of the difficulties of selling produce and because there were many demands on what capital there was (car payments, school fees, food). The effects of the developmental cycle on household status once had been obviated by access to wage labor, but by the 1990s that strategy depended on access to capital that was extended too far. Still, hiring labor was still an option for those households with sufficient cash income. In fact, given the centripetal tendencies of much of agricultural production, including the increased distance of some fields, hired labor appeared to be even more important than previously. There were numerous itinerant laborers in and out of Revealed River throughout the year, some hired to spray pesticides or fertilizer on crops, but most hired to watch over distant fields and herds of cattle. These laborers were Lahu, Yunnanese Chinese, and some Tai Yai (Shan) refugees from Burma. There were, as yet, no Lisu laborers in Revealed River, although Lisu had become laborers for wealthy Lisu and Chinese in See the Tiger Village (Hutheesing 1990a:168-173; Hutheesing 1999). And while laborers were still "nowhere men," many more had long-term dependency relationships with their Lisu employers, just as the Lisu were more dependent on the laborers. A Lahu couple hired by a Lisu household visited the village together or separately at least once a month. The woman came to her employer's household when she was sick to get medicine; the man came to get paid or to consult about a problem with the cattle herd he was watching. Lahu laborers were prevailed upon to remove the bundles of old clothes in the disposal of evil spirits. In another case, several young Yunnanese Chinese men were hired for an entire harvest and housed in an empty house next to that of their employers. But the households that

hired labor were usually those in the larger, wealthy households of each faction. Far more people were unable to hire labor at all; young households could not longer ameliorate their position in the household developmental cycle with hired labor as they had in the opium economy.

The only other way to increase household productivity was to eliminate consumers. This is partly what lay behind sending children to school. Children were sent to school, either in the lowlands or at least to the village Mountain School as soon as parents could get them accepted. This relieved the burden of production on the workers in the household. Children's return by the age of 15 made a great deal of sense in terms of the c/w ratio, as at that time they were able to work as hard as adults. Schooling meant that 27% of the population was not in the village for at least nine months of the year. Clearly this would have substantially reduced the burden of work on producers to feed consumers. There were an average of 4.84 people per household in Revealed River. If we consider the children in schools out of the village to not be members of the household (for at least part of the year) in terms of consumption of household resources, that number is further reduced to 3.53 people/household.

In the end the way to increase household productivity was through harder work. The burden of this fell particularly on the young women in the household. In the agricultural season, girls left their house at dawn and rarely returned before dark. In Nam Long, Payap University/TG-HDP survey in the mid-1980's showed that farmers worked 18 days/month during the rainy season from May to October and 16 days/month during the dry season from November to April. However, my observations were that farmers in Revealed River worked more days, about 20-22 days per month in the agricultural season and young women, the mainstay of the labor force, worked as much as 25 days per month. I will examine some of the reasons for this when I discuss young people's marriage strategies in the next chapter.

Discussion

Household form was the result of both pre-existing practices and adaptation to local conditions. As the locus of strategizing, we can expect practices to shift to allow household members to dynamically respond to the conditions of rapid economic and political change they faced, particularly as they threatened the economic and thus social viability of Lisu households. This resulted in subtle shifts in household practices and composition as people adapted to new opportunities and constraints. These shifts did not fundamentally change the form or function of the household, especially from the perspective of the Lisu themselves. Fundamental structural form was maintained despite profound economic change (*cf.* Wilk 1984), through choosing strategies in keeping with culturally-formed goals, keeping in mind that these were not unified, homogeneous goals but rather a repertoire of sometimes conflicting principles and strategies.

To understand the nature of the shifts in Lisu households, we need to look at both external and internal dynamics (Kinoshita 1995; Fertig 2003; Plakans and Wetherell 2003). Focusing merely on household structure polarizes internal and external processes (Heald 1991). These were tribal cash croppers, so the crop grown – opium – had been the key element in the household resource and labor allocation (internal dynamics) and people's relationship with the world (external dynamics). Changes in the global political economy and Thai state policy in the form of drug policy and environmental policy that affected land tenure presented a shifting set of constraints and opportunities that were addressed through strategies within the household first and foremost (although not exclusively). Just as in the nineteenth century opium had created a new set of opportunities that enabled the emphasis of a particular set of cultural values such as autonomous households and display of repute, the new political economy created a transformed set of constraints and opportunities that had specific effects on the dynamics of intra-household relationships. The key economic factors were the replacement of a single, valuable crop (opium) with a range of commodities; increased dependence on insecure markets; dispersion of agricultural land over the landscape of northern Thailand and into Burma; and a decreased ability

to migrate out or to open new lands. The new system required diverse roles and strategies. There was a need to fulfill a range of economic activities with more specialized personnel; a greater need for skilled management by a household head; and increased workloads for women, especially in terms of weeding of degraded fields and travel to distant plots. Internal dynamics brought into play included the consumer/worker ratio, experienced as drudgery, and tensions between the structurally constructed social interests of people such as father/sons, older brothers/younger brothers, or parents/children. People adapted to changed conditions in ways that attempted to maintain their experience of household autonomy and repute, egalitarianism and respect. Specific strategies included evicting opium “addicts” from the village as an attempt to maintain household autonomy in the face of state military intervention and sending children to school as a means of remedying their experience of increased drudgery and simultaneously preparing children to develop skills appropriate for future viable households. The rules had not changed, but which rules and how they were put into practice had shifted and transmuted. Part of the reason for this is that households behaved as if the developmental cycle existed and people strategized based on their conceptions of their future (Heald 1991; Chelcea 2003). As Lisu in Revealed River Village attempted social reproduction in altered circumstances, their strategies had unintended consequences.

Household Size

A salient point was that the average household size of 4.84 people per household in Revealed River was smaller than reported for Lisu households elsewhere in northern Thailand. When children in boarding schools are eliminated from calculations, then the average was an astoundingly small one of 3.53 people per household, at least for nine months of the year.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ I was familiar enough with three other villages in the cluster to observe similar patterns in household size and composition there as well. However, I was not able to carry out censuses in these villages and so do not have specific numbers for them.

Table 4.1. Average Size of Lisu Households in Thailand		
Year	Location / Source	Average People/Household
1969-1970	Ban Lum (Durrenberger 1971)	About 6 people/household
1968-1970	Evil Peaks (Dessaint and Dessaint 1992)	5.90 people/household
1960s-1970s	Regional (Tribal Research Centre survey) (Kunstadter 1983:16, 19)	6.33 people/household
1980s	See the Tiger (Hutheesing 1990a)	5.20 people/household
1988	Regional (Tribal Research Institute) (McKinnon and Vienne 1989)	6.11 people/household
1992-1994	Revealed River Village	4.84 people/household
(1992-1994)	Revealed River Village, <i>sans</i> school children	3.53 people/household
1997	Lisu in national census of 20 northern provinces (Highland Economic and Social Development Promotion Office 2000).	5.90 people/household

Small household size in Revealed River can be attributed to a number of factors, some the random result of the point in history at which Revealed River stood, and others due to meaningful patterns as a result of adaptation to conditions in Thirty Thousand. The population of Revealed River was small and thus may not be representative of social processes (Bedford 1980:29). Given the time period, the average household size could be the result of historical accident, a matter of where many households were in the developmental cycle, that is, this could be the result of a larger percentage of young households (nuclear) at this point in time in the village rather than a historical trend reflecting real adaptation through reduction of household size (Hammel and Laslett 1974).

The average household size had been reduced in part by the migration of three households in 1991. These had been larger households with an average of a little over 7.3 persons/household. At least one, likely two, were stem households. Although I never met these people, I speculate that they were under more pressure than other households due to having a higher number of children in the household than average; 10 children left the local school when these households left, which indicates that not only were there an average of over three children

per household, they were apparently too young or too poor to attend lowland schools. This would have been a tremendous burden on the adults of these households. Village gossips claimed that these families had left because they had opium addicts in the family and chose not to expel them. However, the pattern of out-migration and three subsequent cases in 1992 (also large families, but one an older household with several daughters of marriageable age) was that households chose to remove themselves, they said, due to lack of land close to Revealed River and access to better land resources elsewhere. As I will discuss later, their migration appears also to have been due to their positions outside of the emerging patrilineal kinship structure of Revealed River.

Small household sizes might have been due, as well, to accidents of life rather than deliberate strategies. There were 2-3 female-headed households in Revealed River, due to the husband's absence, usually in jail. These households had three members each, a mother and two young children. The developmental cycle of these households had been short-circuited and it is likely that they would never recover from their grinding poverty. In a village of this size, the average was also skewed by the presence of one single elderly woman's household; eliminating that one household brings the average household size with children up to 4.95 people/household. In addition, there was the phenomenon of absent elder sons, even if unmarried or divorced (their wives usually having returned to their natal village). Being a member of a household meant, in practical terms, living under one roof and working together, participating in rituals and social relationships of hierarchy, avoidance, and obligation. It was some time before I discovered that there were several young adult males who had disappeared into the drug trade.

Finally, other factors in small household size were the result of intentional actions on the part of Lisu actors in relation to household composition, even if compelled by the political economic system. Most striking was the removal of elderly parents from Revealed River Village. This would almost certainly have altered average household size and the appearance of nuclear vs. stem households. However, most who remained in Revealed River who had sent their opium-using elderly parents away were very reluctant to speak about it, so I have no reliable figures. In

short, the small average household size emerged out of factors that are related to the transformed conditions to which households adapted; a number of small strategies in each household resulted in these numbers overall.

However, household size may reflect specific cultural conventions on the basis of which families consciously adapted as they planned for the future. There is an economic element; like other opium-growing peoples in northern Thailand, average household size tended to be larger than those of non-cash-cropping upland ethnic minority people (Kunstadter 1983; Highland Economic and Social Development Promotion Office 2000). On the other hand, cultural processes specific to the Lisu brought about different household composition from other opium growing upland groups. Durrenberger's work illuminated the production logic involved in Lisu household composition. The importance of the ratio of consumers to producers in the Lisu household is indirectly indicated in other ways. Calculations based on a 1977 Tribal Research Centre Survey showed the Lisu had a dependency ratio of 77.4, meaning a very low proportion of children under the age of 14 and adults over the age of 60 compared to the population between the ages of 15-59. In contrast, the Hmong dependency varied between 100.3 to 107.7 and the Lahu dependency ratio was 111.7 (Kunstadter 1983:22). This indicates different cultural processes involved in birth rates. In short, there was a culturally constructed tendency toward smaller households.

There was, furthermore, a strong cultural tendency toward establishment of separate households as soon as viable. One reason was the cultural logic of household autonomy and repute. Another was that the taboos on interaction, particularly between daughters-in-law and fathers-in-law, were burdensome in daily life. The speaking taboos were incentive for younger married couples to form their own households because having her own household gave a woman some measure of relaxation of vigilance over her language and behavior. Women resisted their subordinate status in their in-laws' household. While a young wife's status would relatively increase when her husband's younger brother took a wife, Lisu practice was to not have two

young married couples under one roof, so this was not an avenue for improvement of her position. In fact, an older wife asserting power over a young wife gave rise to considerable conflict within households. The cultural logic of household autonomy made independent households the conventional means by which both sons and their wives achieved repute, despite the increased risk of drudgery or poverty.

There were fewer stem households in Revealed River than there had been in Evil Peaks. This was due to some extent to the age structure. Headman Daeng and his brothers mostly had children before the age of marriage; in contrast, most of Kowboi's faction was old enough to have children of marriageable age. Of the Chinese faction, those remaining in the village were young and had explicitly limited fertility; Chinese with older children had left the village in order to take them to private schools.⁶¹

At the same time, the tendency toward nuclear households was given impetus by the allocation of land by the Project on the basis of households (15 *rai*/household). While this policy was not in full effect, it was constantly threatened and all the villagers knew the plan. Establishing a new household as soon as feasible made it possible to negotiate for land allocations with the Project before Project personnel put a stop to the opening of new land altogether. They were very unsympathetic to frequent requests for permission to open new land and constantly threatened to end or freeze allocations, requests they habitually defined as mendacious, but they found it far more difficult to deny land to a newly established household. I will discuss the effects Project land policy had on marriage and kinship structures in the next chapter.

⁶¹ There was almost no chance of Chinese children being accepted into government schools. They were far less likely to have "blue cards." They were defined as illegal and dangerous to a far greater degree than other upland ethnic minority peoples. Furthermore, many preferred to send their children to Chinese-language schools, so their children tended to be in private schools. Their parents moved to town to oversee the children while trading or working in waged jobs to pay for school.

A Demographic Transition?

That the absence of school age children made such a difference in average household size bespeaks the large number of children in the village. Astoundingly, it appeared that 45% of the village residents were children under the age of 15. This was the result of most of the households having parents in their 40s or past and at least 3-4 children; more had 5-6 children who lived to adulthood. That generation was having children (or were near it, being in their teens). However, most of the parents in their late 20s to 30s had only two to three children. This could have been due to later age at marriage; they may not have been planning to have only two children. But the fact that in many cases the youngest child was four or five indicates that planning was involved. I should note here that Thailand had a very successful family planning program that was renowned for having reduced its population growth rate through educational programs and making birth control technology widely available (Knodel, Havanon and Pramualratana 1984; Knodel, Chamrathirong and Debavalya 1987). Furthermore, the Thai government was deeply concerned by the fact that the upland ethnic minority peoples had a much higher population growth rate than did lowland Thai, especially as upland minority peoples were not "racially" Thai (Winichakul 1994; Gillogly 2004). Most younger women in Revealed River went to hospitals or clinics to give birth, especially for their first child. It is likely that there was a decrease in mortality rates for infants and women because of this use of technological medicine for birth, as was noted for the Hmong (Kunstadter *et al.* 1993). At clinics, women were exposed to the Thai program for population control. Thai nurses would have very strongly encouraged Lisu women to practice birth control. Few young people spoke of it openly; sons and daughters-in-law would never speak of such things in front of their parents or parents-in-law due to avoidance taboos, and they were working far too much to spend much time with me. But unmarried women and a few older married women told me confidentially that women went to lowland hospitals to get birth control shots or pills, and I found the detritus of birth control (condom packages and empty birth control packets) around the village. Gossip also told me that a number of women had had

an “operation” to prevent further children, although none of my informants claimed to have had the surgery themselves (it was at shame to discuss sexual matters, rather than shame at controlling fertility).

There were two key factors in couples’ strategies, perceptions of overwork and concerns about lack of resources in the future. Parents told me constantly that raising children was very hard work. Given their work loads, young couples took steps to space out or limit the number of children they had and sent young children to school to reduce that burden. The other factor was a profound sense of insecurity about the availability of resources for their children to establish their own households in the future. Married couples, even single women, spoke often, worriedly, about the future availability of land and how their children would make a living. This anxiety was exacerbated by the fact that the nature of state control changed with policy set in Bangkok. Again, sending children to school was a strategy to open up options for them by expanding their skill sets. As a result of stresses on the household as a unit of production, married couples had apparently chosen to limit their fertility.

I can not say that these patterns were not cyclical trends created by the developmental cycle (*e.g.*, Kinoshita 1995). This is a snapshot, and only time will tell. However, I am arguing from people’s statements of their concerns, observations of strategies, and local explanations for them. Revealed River was unusual due to the Project’s influence. The irony of the Project was that while people under its aegis had begun to control fertility, the pressures of over-population were pushed to outside of the Project area through out-migration of large families and resident families finding land to use in other parts of the north.

Nevertheless, there appeared to be a mini-demographic transition occurring, especially for those families with sufficient land to stay in the village. At first glance, this seems to counter demographic transition theory as few of the women of the now-child-bearing generation had attended school (Udjo 2001). The value of children had shifted, however. It did not have to do with a decrease in the need for household labor; households were increasingly dependent on

having a wide range of laboring adults in order to manage the diverse economic activities they undertook in the new agricultural system (*cf.* Caldwell 1996). It had far more to do with the immediate experience of concern about adequately caring for their children in the face of increased work loads for women and, possibly, the loss of elderly parents⁶² who had once looked after children while parents went to distant fields. Intergenerational wealth transfers were not measurable, but considering the important role of adolescent and adult children in working for their parents (intergenerational wealth transfers from children to parents) (Caldwell 1976:139-146), it did not appear that this was a critical factor in the increase in use of family planning in any straightforward way. The immediate impetus for many young parents had to do, rather, with household members' assessment of the constraints under which they labored, particularly the lack of land and their conceptions of a future of increasingly limited resources. This is in keeping with the economic opportunity hypothesis that falling expectations and the sense of increased competition for limited resources will bring about reduced fertility rates as married couples become cautious about opportunities and their ability to raise their children (Abernethy 2002). Specifically, as the 'frontier' of northern Thailand receded and the availability of land for inheritance declined, people controlled their fertility (Hammel and Goldstein 1996). A good parent, Kowboi told me sadly, must make sure his children can marry and become independent, and he was not sure if he would be able to do this for all of his seven children (all married or of marriageable age). Lisu parents therefore sought to expand their children's opportunities through education. This is analogous to findings for Thai farmers, where education levels rose especially where there were insufficient land resources for all of the children of a household (Foster 1978a:437-438). The Lisu of Revealed River continued to strategize within their framework of meaning and social obligations, but these resulted in an accumulation of unintended change.

⁶² Many elderly parents smoked opium for the pain of arthritis and other illnesses. This was the population removed from Revealed River Village when they expelled opium 'addicts.'

Labor and Households in the New Political Economy: Domestic Time, Historical Time, Structural Continuities

Nevertheless, intergenerational transfer of wealth is a key mechanism in Lisu strategies when considered in light of the domestic developmental cycle. Caldwell argued that the demographic transition was marked by intergenerational wealth transfer reversals: from child to parent in traditional, agrarian society, to parent to child in industrialized society (Caldwell 1976:139-146). I can not say whether parents or children received more in Revealed River society; it is not clear cut because the situation was in flux, formed by the conjunction of domestic and historical time. The Lisu cultural construction was that parents worked hard for children when they were young, paid for sons' bridewealth, and bestowed silver jewelry on daughters when they married. In the new economy, the value of intergenerational wealth transfers to children had perhaps increased or, at least, it had become imperative that children to receive such transfers. It consisted of land and a house (albeit not a permanent structure) for sons and their wives; possible expenses for school, such as uniforms and supplies; and silver. The silver bestowed on children had attained new significance as a source of capital, so that giving it in marriage exchange had an opportunity cost as it could not then be invested in new capital for agriculture. Yet none of this takes into account the labor that children potentially contributed to their parents' household. This labor can not be calculated simply by the value of the crop produced. It had a value beyond that both for subsistence and status display for household reputé, and much of it had to do with the time allocation possibilities of having more producers for the household head to manage. Furthermore, daughters and daughters-in-law put a tremendous amount of work into household agricultural production. This was highly valuable. The direction of intergenerational wealth transfers as a marker of fundamental change from "traditional" to "modern" society is unpersuasive in this case. Lisu had been involved in a global trade for over a century, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Cash cropping was not new; to understand smaller household size

and birth control practices , we must look, rather, at the specific characteristics of the post-opium economy.

Intergenerational wealth transfers are interesting in terms of the founding of new households, socially constructed positions within the household, and the kinds of obligations and debts created (or not created) in such transfers. A central element of the demographic transition model is the chain between inheritance and reproduction. It assumes limited economic “space” and that overpopulation is avoided through restriction of marriage to those who can inherit an economic niche. However, this is functionalist. Rather, niche mechanisms are relevant only for the behavior of specific social groups in historically specific ways (Fertig 2003). Here, intergenerational wealth transfers are significant in Lisu practice as part of their imagined future, that for which they plan. A processual perspective better explains Lisu social relationships in conditions of change. It is in their actions that the structure emerges; through reproduction, the structure is transformed.

Potential intergenerational wealth transfers were significant in that it was part of married couples’ assessments of their children’s future and thus had consequences for household size. But it was also important to children, as potential transfers were an important part of the reason that children saw their interests as being tied up with those of their parents despite differential assimilation to the dominant Thai national culture and young couples’ “natural” (to Lisu) desire to become autonomous were heightened by young men’s greater knowledge of new crops and markets, and frustration with their fathers’ adjustment to change; and by young couples’ sense of urgency to get land allotments before it became impossible in the threatened future of more stringent state restrictions. It also heightened the already inherent tensions between older and younger brothers because inheritance had increased in importance in establishing new households. The formation of new households became a stress point in terms of children’s interest in achieving independence, parents’ goal of facilitating this, and parents’ needs to maintain control over children’s labor.

One of the clearest points of tension was that between older and younger brothers. Older brothers faced particular problems in fulfilling their goals. In the past, older siblings and their spouses had received an intergenerational transfer of wealth through marriage exchanges, but also of labor as the parents helped them to open up their first fields and build a house. Under the opium economy, access to land, the fluidity of opium as a commodity, and the availability of hired labor had ameliorated this risk. What the younger son inherited after having cared for his elderly parents to their death was whatever silver rupees had been hoarded from good opium sales, land that the sons themselves had cleared and planted, and a less than substantial house, both of which latter resources would be abandoned with migration. By the 1990s, with the severe limitations on land, inheritance had increased in importance and younger brothers were at an advantage. The economic risks for young households were more severe and this risk fell disproportionately on older brothers. I could not measure direct tension between brothers, but it was clear that older brothers in Revealed River had a higher rate of opium addiction and abandonment of their families. Young households seeking economic prosperity and culturally defined success were also far more likely to take the risks of growing opium or, in the political economy of drug production interdiction in northern Thailand, to become mules in the drug trade. Other data, discussed earlier, also indicates that households that became involved in opium production tended to be young households, which tended to be poorer (Ramitanondh and Somsawasdi 1992; Salzer 1993). As the households of younger brothers tended to be further along in the developmental cycle with children of working age when they became independent on the father's death, they rarely faced the poverty and risks that their older brothers had. For younger households, on their own, seeking the goal of an autonomous household with reputé in a newly harsh economic environment, many men folded. Their wives returned to their parents'

household because their husbands did not work; the men went to town seeking wage labor and failed to return; they got involved in the drug trade and became addicts or were arrested.⁶³

The small average household size in Revealed River also presents a conundrum as other literature indicates that larger households are more adaptive to modernized market-oriented agriculture by allowing control of a more diverse pool of labor (Heald 1991). The complex labor processes entailed by diverse production systems required tighter management (Wilk 1984). In terms of the social organization of labor in Revealed River, the key point was that different allocations of labor were required by the temporal and spatial complexity of the new production systems. This created a sense among Lisu villagers of being overworked because of the wide range of tasks to be carried out, many in competition with each other. Management became critical; it was, in fact, the most important factor correlated with household agricultural success (Salzer 1993). Broad dichotomies such as traditional vs. modernized agriculture are in fact unhelpful here (Wilk 1984).

The Hmong, in contrast to the Lisu, have increased household size, a culturally available strategy given the pre-existing cultural value placed on patrilineal extended households with patriarchal power, as well as polygyny (Cooper 1983). In contrast, Mien household form suggests opposite tendencies in household dynamics that allowed shifts between small and large households in specific historical circumstances. In the days of the government opium monopoly, rights to grow and buy opium were granted to Mien “chiefs,” and many households in one village increased their size through adoption in order to expand production. The Mien, in fact, were famous for this high rate of adoption of children from other ethnic groups who were then fully incorporated into their Mien household (Miles 1972a; Miles 1972b). Here, the history of Mien relations with lowland kingdoms and economic conditions produced a shifting structure over time

⁶³ Conditions did not necessarily improve for young women with children who left their husbands or lost them to the drug trade or jail. The women lived in separate households in their father’s compound. Without another adult to share labor in the household, they struggled to survive economically. This was discussed in Chapter 3.

(Jonsson 2001a, 2001b). The historically specific political economy and the dynamics of social structure in each case created different household forms that were, nonetheless, structurally enduring. The logic of Lisu social structures is quite different from these two cases in that autonomous, equalitarian households remained a primary feature of Lisu social structure even in the face of profound political and economic change.⁶⁴ Lisu culture assumed equality among all full households. It placed a high value on household autonomy; on achieving and displaying repute, particularly through hard work; placed a ritual emphasis on protection and prosperity of each household, unconnected from other households; and understood full adulthood to be achieved at marriage and establishment of one's own household. All of these features pushed, inexorably, toward establishing households early despite conditions in the agricultural system that favored larger households of a diverse labor pool managed by a household head.

Autonomous households appear to be an enduring social form. An appropriate analogy here are Tibetan, Tibetanized, and partially-Tibetanized societies, which shared these characteristics with Lisu on the basis of historical contact and linguistic commonalities. Social structures were fluid and multifaceted, thus able to adapt to the variety of political and economic conditions in which Tibetan societies existed (Samuel 1993:128, 131, 146, 149-152, 335, 363; McKhann 1998). The household was the basic building block in these societies historically and across the region, with an emphasis on the continuity and preservation of the household. In certain conditions, continuity of the patrilineage was also a significant element in this repertoire, but even where the patrilineage was relatively muted the preservation of the household endured as an important value especially where there was property to pass on. Ritual constituted the household as a microcosm, starting with marriage or, in the case of Lisu, with the establishment of a separate household. Each household head was a ritual specialist; each lineage had its own religious specialist. Households and individuals worked out their own destinies using whatever

⁶⁴ Hmong and Mien are not related to Lisu ethnically or linguistically, nor were they related historically until they moved into the same territory in northern Thailand. It is an accident of Southeast Asian history that they are all, today, opium-growing "hill tribes."

capital – social, cultural, economic – their fate provided (note *repute* or *myi³-do⁵*, where *myi³* can be glossed as fate and *do⁵* as work or effort). Social relationships tended to be contractual, fully recognizing each individual's distinct fate; similarly, the principle of equivalence of all full households reflected the lack of relationships of patronage or dependency among households. Developed in the fragmented political landscape of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia, household and localized descent groups gained importance. How can one social form be viable despite these changes? The household form appears to be a dynamic and flexible form of adaptation for these societies. Localized patrilineages, allegiance groups, and household-centered practice gave Lisu flexibility to adapt to local circumstances and allowed them to incorporate elements from new situations without essential change in the underlying premisses of ritual, household, and kin structures. Lisu strategies were in keeping with existing structural forms and resulted, ironically, in smaller households, but with the emergence (or, perhaps, re-emergence) of inter-household relations that allowed more access to a pool of labor that could be allocated to a range of different tasks. This must be understood both in terms of the specific features of the organization of agricultural production in Revealed River and the prior text of social relationships and cultural principles.

From this perspective, the household developmental cycle has both cultural and economic significance to Lisu practice. As a cultural frame, it is part of the Lisu conception of how to be Lisu; the economic features circumscribed material possibilities; together these formed the parameters of their imagined future. The characteristics of the system were the result of the intersection of two times – that of the household developmental cycle and that of the history of opium, swiddening, and population movement. It is the economic features that have been transformed through the interdiction of opium and swiddening, with consequences for Lisu strategies for achieving their imagined future, a mature and autonomous household with the freedom to move as a means of conflict resolution. History intersected with this to create new forces in the household.

Households at a particular point in their developmental cycle – that of maturity – that intersected with the beginning of restrictions on land use and opium production, had had an advantage. They had had more labor available and thus more land opened that they were able to claim ownership of as the Project began to map land use. They also had surplus from opium cultivation that they were able to invest in the new means of production, such as trucks, seeds, and chemical inputs. Households that were relatively labor-poor at the time of the Project inception in the early 1980s or were newly formed faced devastating stresses and strains. In addition to the households that migrated just before the start of my fieldwork, the three households that left Revealed River while I was there tended to have large families (five daughters in one household, four children under the age of 17 in another) and said they lacked sufficient land in the area of Revealed River to make a living. Land-rich households benefitted in other ways. They could afford to let land lie fallow, and for longer periods, while still having enough land to keep in production. Conversely, land-poor households could keep little fallow land and were compelled to use short fallow periods, resulting in prevention of soil recuperation, reduction of yields, and increase in both weed invasions and labor inputs necessary to obtain sufficient production (*cf.* Perz and Walker 2002:1022). The household resource base had been frozen by state control of land, and the Lisu experienced a freezing of the developmental phase of the domestic cycle.

In similar ways, the Romanian socialist state had appropriated the excess space of “landlord” households that the owners had conceived of as residential space held for their family as it matured (Chelcea 2003). Generally similar processes were underway in the Project. In this context, the hoarding of land by “wealthy” farmers made a great deal of sense. The heads of larger households with adult and older adolescent households not only wanted to be able to open more land to take advantage of their labor pool and build household reputation, although this was fundamental to the cultural logic of being Lisu. They were also anticipating land needs in terms of the future phases of the developmental cycle in the face of the state’s appropriation of local

natural resources, that is, land. Disjunctions between historical time, annual agricultural cycles, and the household developmental cycle (Heald 1991) also resulted in spatial dispersion of the household's agricultural land and other economic enterprises as households attempted to accommodate the developmental cycle to historical conditions and the transformation of the annual agricultural cycle. These resulted in shifts in social interests, ability to fulfill social obligations (for at least some households), and adjustments in household composition if only for part of the year. Such concerns were also in action in inter-household social relations.

The issue of the regular cyclical changes in household size was one I raised several times with Project officials in regard to how land had been allocated recently and how they intended to allocate it in the future. The developmental cycle of the Lisu household was completely out of their purview, however. The most they told me of their consideration of the problems of future land allocation was that they intended to incorporate the village and all of its territory as a cooperative and then allow land allocations to take place within that set amount of land. The Project's failure to recognize the developmental cycle short-circuited or circumvented the household developmental cycle, that is, households could not count on the rewards of hard work and development toward a mature household form. Historical time had intersected with domestic time to create new inequalities and concretize old ones.

The household can be seen as an activity group (Wilk and Netting 1984), and from this perspective, cultural change can be conceptualized as a shift in the size and level of the groups to perform activities necessary to economic survival. From this perspective, the household is losing its independence in reproduction (Wilk 1984). State control has seeped into the economic domain of the household. However, this is not the only perspective that makes sense of intra-household dynamics in Revealed River. The cultural logic of being Lisu structured the process by which Lisu villagers adapted new practices and their specific practices make little sense outside of understanding the structural contradictions of social relationships, the ways in which structural positions channeled practices in keeping with their understanding of their relationships with others

in the household and planning on the basis of an imagined future based on the ebb and flow of household size and the possibilities for repute.

Given the nature of intra-household relationships and culturally-constructed goals of household form, Lisu households remained small. Fission of new households still occurred as soon as feasible despite the apparent disadvantages of small households in an agricultural production system that required control over a diverse labor pool; the household had to take on new management responsibilities (Wilk 1984). How were the requirements of the agricultural system met within the context of Lisu social structural principles? It appears that alternative means of organizing and controlling labor outside of intra-household relations emerged. Clusters of agnatic kin allowed both household autonomy and the control needed for complex labor processes. The household remained a dynamic and flexible unit; it was its relations with other households that was the locus of transformation in social relationships.

CHAPTER 5

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG HOUSEHOLDS: MARRIAGE, ALLEGIANCE GROUPS, AND PATRILINEAGES

Lisu households were marked by a great degree of autonomy, especially under the opium economy. Earlier researchers found few significant overarching social structures, noting the practical lack of patrilineal relationships in everyday life and connections among households within villages to the extent that they wondered if the village was a relevant category at all. Households interacted, of course, if by nothing else than by marriage and labor exchange. Kinship was relevant for marriage, but only for as little as ensuring clan exogamy. In the post-opium economy of Revealed River, the expression of social structure was transformed at those points of interaction among households, that is, marriage and post-marital residency and the basis of labor exchange on patrilineal relations rather than affinal or sororal relations. These transformations were actualized through strategies to control access to land and cultivate political connections within the village. In short, the most significant domain of adaptation to the post-opium political economy was inter-household relationships.

Three Weddings

Turtle's Marriage and Divorce

A young man, Turtle, had suffered weakness and dispiritedness. His father, the shaman of the Laoyipha lineage, held a small soul-calling ceremony in response to Turtle's anomie. Turtle attributed it to weakness from a bout of malaria for which he'd been hospitalized. The village girls said he was pining after a lost love, a girl associated with the Yipha faction whose family had moved due to quarrels with Headman Red over the previous failed marriage between the girl's

family and Red's younger brother.⁶⁵ Not long after the soul-calling ceremony, Turtle's family arranged for a marriage with a girl from distant village east of Chiang Dao mountain. Turtle was pleased; he had seen the girl at a dance and she looked like his lost love, so he readily agreed to the marriage. A large brideprice was paid, acquired by selling a significant portion of the household's cattle herd. But the marriage only lasted a couple of months. It soon became apparent that the bride did not like her groom. Despite her in-laws showing great friendliness to her, she was quiet and uncommunicative and refused to be alone with her husband. She did what was required of her but showed none of the liveliness and energy that new brides usually showed. The groom's father diagnosed soul loss and performed an elaborate soul-calling ceremony on her behalf. The bridge he built was a nearly usable bridge over the drainage trench in front of the family home, decorated with whittled bamboo and white paper cutouts. Concurrently, the soul of the groom was called as well. It was to no avail. In time, the bride openly stated that she thought her husband silly, too talkative, and not at all attractive (several village girls agreed with her, with amusement). The bride was an orphan under her uncle's guardianship and she had felt coerced into the marriage, either because she and her uncle did not get along or because her uncle wanted the bride price. She ran away and not long after married another man. Despite this, her uncle returned only half of the considerable brideprice that had been paid. Still another soul-calling ceremony was carried out for the unhappy and embarrassed young man a few months later. Perhaps it worked, as not long after he remarried to a girl from a nearby village – happily. Turtle's experience was held up to me by young women and often by their mothers as one of many examples of the ill that could come when parents forced their children to marry against love.

⁶⁵ Relationships between the two main lineages in the village were strained, having worsened after an arranged marriage between a younger brother of the headman and a daughter of the *maw mong* (servitor to Old Grandfather Spirit) at that time. When the bride left the groom, her parents refused to return the bridewealth; according to the bride's family, he was at fault for his drunken behavior, long visits to the lowlands, and infidelity. Some time later, the headman got drunk, took a shotgun, and fired several shots around the village including the house in which I was living. Shortly thereafter, the *maw mong's* family left Revealed River Village for a satellite village.

It also showed the possibilities for marriage where there was sufficient wealth available for bride price.

'Awu's Scandal and Marriage

'Awu was Kowboi's youngest son. He was healthy, cheerful, hard-working, much loved by his family, and developmentally disabled (Down's Syndrome). When the marker of adulthood is marriage, what position was he in? His brothers were married and like other boys and girls, he was interested in marriage. One night, whispers of a scandal passed around the village. 'Awu had snuck into the house of a family associated with his father's allegiance group as affines and tried to 'do things' to a young girl there. The village watched with bated breath – in the old days, I was told, Kowboi would have had to take his son out into the forest and murder him if he continued such behavior. And then, one morning, I was invited to their house to meet 'Awu's wife. They had had a small wedding ceremony known as a "spirit worship" marriage ceremony. The bride was a Lisu girl from the next village over the ridge, about a half hour away. She was pregnant with a "forest child," out of wedlock, something deeply disapproved of and an unusual occurrence. In this case, the father of the child refused to marry her (he was reputed to be the Thai mountain teacher in that village). Her status made it an inexpensive marriage. Kowboi had resolved the problem of his son's developing sexuality and potentially ambiguous social position by marrying him to this shamed young woman, who also gained adult status and a degree of respectability.

'Awu's and his bride's parents had successfully fulfilled one of the most important responsibilities of parents, that of marrying off their children. The principle of pairing was expressed in the idea that all adults should marry. Kowboi had explained this to me shortly before New Year 1993. You couldn't get anything as one, he had told me, you needed two, like

chopsticks, and others agreed.⁶⁶ Lisu in northeastern India (recent migrants from northeastern Burma) stated that life became complete only by marriage; it was like a coin, male on one side and female on the other. Life could only bloom when the male and female combined and united. One of the fundamental duties of Lisu parents, therefore, was to ensure that their children married (Maitra 1993:128-129, 147-148). Kowboi was especially aware of this as his next eldest daughter should have been ready for marriage that New Year. She was a good worker and she had learned all the New Year dances. But she was sick with *lupus nephritis* and could not marry that year – or perhaps ever. Rather than dance and court and sing, she was often in Chiang Mai at the University Hospital, and Kowboi worried for her.

Ai Yi's Second Son's Marriage

One day in 1993 I was called to Ai Yi's house, the younger brother of Kowboi. Ai Yi and his wife had just concluded negotiations for the marriage of their second son to Ai Yi's sister's daughter. The groom's sister, Alema, told me he had liked this girl for a long time. The girl was openly smiling in a way unusual for brides. The mothers of the bride and groom sat next to each other celebrating; they were, perhaps, even more pleased than the bride and groom. The marriage was an excellent strategy as the bride did not have to leave her neighborhood; it consolidated relationships that previously had been based on affinal/allegiance group relationships; and it did not potentially split any land holdings. Due to the close relationship of the bride and groom, the bride price was said to be reasonable and respectable. The mother of the groom said it was the same as had been paid by the bride's father's family for the bride's mother

⁶⁶ Chopsticks was a metaphor for prospective brides and grooms and for a bridal couple. See Hutheesing 1990a: 204-5 for songs containing this metaphor. A predominant theme among Lahu, a Tibeto-Burman group closely related to Lisu, was that chopsticks came in pairs (Du 1995). This emphasis on pairs as potent and productive was carried through in scheduling of New Year celebrations at Revealed River. Festivities had to occur in twos because all good things, that which is productive, come in pairs. One year, the Forestry Center that ran the Project scheduled a village cluster celebration for the fifth day of New Year, compelling village elders to schedule a sixth day to balance it out. Longer celebrations increased the expense; usually only the wealthiest villages could maintain six days of celebrations.

(to the groom's patrilineage) 30 years previously – 300 rupees – and a little extra in the wedding feast. They could not tell me how much it was worth in Thai *baht*, frustrating me very much until I realized that it was in part this non-convertibility which allowed them to unambiguously demonstrate repute to the gaze of the community on the basis of an un-countable display of wealth. Such a marriage brought repute without huge expense. This brideprice given for the groom's mother, incidentally, was in keeping with figures given by Dessaint for Evil Peaks. The marriage feast was cheerful, well-fed, and moderately well-liquored, but small, confined to the members of the allegiance group of upper Revealed River.

Marriage

For a village the size of Revealed River, there seemed to be few marriages. I was there a year before a marriage took place in the village. A reason became apparent in the New Year celebrations of 1994. I joined a group of male lineage elders sitting on a ridge above the dancing at one of the upper village houses, observing and commenting on the boys and girls dancing as elders do. They noted the number of marriageable girls in the village and expressed sadness that there were too few boys for their girls. They considered strategies to get the girls married.

That year, one of the satellite villages in the Thirty Thousand cluster had scheduled their New Year celebration for the month after most other villages' celebrations. This was possible because of the vagaries of the lunar calendar. Each village servitor kept track of the lunar calendar for his own village with the help of the elders, and as a result the calendar might differ from village to village, or even within the village if there were rival factions with rival servitors of the Old Grandfather shrine. They also adjusted the calendar to fit local needs. In 1969, Evil Peaks postponed its New Years celebration for 30 days because it would have fallen during the opium harvest (Dessaint 1972a:90-91), and Lahu villages made such adjustments as well when they were getting in their opium harvest (Jones 1967). In addition, Lisu in northern Thailand were notorious for their lack of interest in counting anything (a point noted by Durrenberger,

Hutheeing, and the Lisu college students who had formed their own local NGO as well),⁶⁷ so that there were no wide-ranging checks against a given servitor's variations in counting. The ritual calendar was, like the groups of households in villages, unregulated by overarching structures of systematization.

The elders discussed why the smaller village had scheduled its New Year for a year later. Some claimed that the much smaller village, which had an even higher proportion of unmarried girls than Revealed River, chose the later month in hopes of attracting more visitors and thus young men to court and marry the girls. The other reason given was that the village had invested heavily in planting barley on contract to the Boonrawd Breweries, and due to late harvest and interference from the Project they had not received their payments in time to make the expenditures needed at New Years – retrieval of pawned silver, new dresses, liquor, pigs, and the other elements of status display. Thus, the village made practical decisions oriented toward facilitating households' display of repute and to help household heads to fulfill their responsibility to get their children married. This redounded to the repute of the village. Revealed River Village elders both admired and were jealous of the strategy.

In this section, I will discuss shifts in marriage strategies, both in terms of the constraints faced in establishing marriages and new households, and the strategies of Lisu parents and children in bringing about marriage. Marriage in Revealed River was a domain in which changes in household strategies were active and visible. Strategies about when and whom to marry and where to live shifted in response to the social and economic context in which people lived. Marriage had become more difficult to achieve as a result of lack of disposable wealth, which was related to land scarcity. Key consequences for social structure were increase in age at first

⁶⁷ The Lisu of Nujiang Canyon in Yunnan had a "famous" bird and flower calendar that helped them to determine when to start various farming activities. This was based on the time of year that certain natural phenomena occurred, such as the blooming of flowers, the calls of birds and variations in the growing grasses. There were ten months, each named after a bird or flower (Chen, Huang and Zhu 2003:9-10). Such a calendar would have been useless for the Lisu who migrated south.

marriage, a related shift toward patrilocality, an increase in agnatic density, and a re-emphasis of patrilineality. The trigger for change was the shift in context, not in culturally possible practices. Shifting conditions re-shaped every-day assessments of relationships by households and brought about culturally consistent changes because people's practice existed within a cultural framework in which alternative strategies existed. To understand the way in which "responding to the shifting conditions of its existence ... the cultural order reproduces itself in and as change" (Sahlins 1985:xii), we must understand the interests of people in different social positions. Age at first marriage, bridewealth, reasons for marital instability, and the desired characteristics of a spouse are ways of looking at the culturally constructed interests of different social actors in order to highlight the changes in marriage practices.

Historical Marriage Practices

Marriage for southern Lisu was based on bridewealth, but specific practices varied considerably over time and by location. Only three historical documents available to me mentioned Lisu social structure, and they had little to say about kinship and marriage; clearly their comments were informed by the authors' roles as colonial explorers and Christian missionaries. Fraser's work was based mostly on the Flowery Lisu in the central part of Lisu distribution in Yunnan, and in far northeastern Burma. Rose and Brown made contact with the Black Lisu, but had greater contact with the more southerly and easterly Flowery and White Lisu of the Sino-Burma frontier. The recent ancestors of the Lisu of northern Thailand migrated from these Flowery Lisu populations in Burma. The writers did not clearly distinguish among the different groups of Lisu when discussing marriage practices. Nor is it in most cases possible to correlate marriage practices with economy, polity, or even other features of the social structure. However, these give us an idea of the range of culturally appropriate behavior. Clearly there were variations in the marriage structures.

Marriage tended to occur at a young age, before the age of 25 for a young man and usually by the age of 15 or 16 years for a girl (Rose and Brown 1911:263; Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)588; Fraser 1922:ix). Lisu were renowned for the early age of marriage for girls even in northern Thailand. Marriage was initiated in a number of ways including: arranged marriages; negotiation for a bride initiated by the groom's family through a middleman, possibly a village elder or male relative; elopement; and exchange of brides between families (Rose and Brown 1911:263; Fraser 1922:ix-x; Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1)588).

Arranged and negotiated marriages were depicted as the norm, or at least the ideal. Brideprice was set at the time of betrothal, unless brides were exchanged between families, in which case there was no brideprice paid. The ideal was that the same sum was given for a daughter as her father had given for her mother (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1) 588; Fraser 1922:ix), but observers varied in their reports of what that amount was. Rose and Brown stated that the brideprice varied from eight to ten ounces of silver, about 25 British shillings (Rose and Brown 1911:263); Fraser that it was between five and fifty rupees (Fraser 1922:ix-x); and Scott that the common amount was ten rupees regardless of the "qualities" of the bride, but it had formerly been much higher, one hundred and fifty rupees (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1) 588). No mention was made of brideservice as an element of exchange. However, according to Fraser, if a family had only daughters, a son-in-law was adopted into the bride's family (Fraser 1922:x).

Bride exchange was practiced only among poor families who could not afford bridewealth (Maitra 1993:149-150).⁶⁸ It was thus a form of marriage with less repute. Another variation was elopement. In Kengtung State (northeastern Burma) in the late nineteenth century, marriage was often by elopement. After hiding in the jungle for a few days, the couple returned to their village and a payment made to the bride's parents (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1) 588). Kengtung State

⁶⁸ Both Dessaint and Hutheesing reported that Lisu claimed that exchange of brides was sure to result in the death of one of the four spouses (Dessaint 1972a:146; Hutheesing 1990a:108). This did not seem to be a problem in Revealed River Village where one of the four marriages I observed was a bride exchange.

was an area of dense opium cultivation and a site of much warfare by the northern Tai states resisting British and Siamese control. It is likely that bridewealth was related to opium prices that varied depending on markets and warfare. Payments were made to the woman's parents, or her husband and his family if she had been married. Eloping was a low status form of marriage (Fraser 1922:x) because even if the brideprice was as high as 150 rupees, it avoided the expense of feasting, including a further exchange of wealth at the ceremony and provision of a great deal of rice beer, pork, and rice to be consumed over the course of the day and night (Fraser 1922:ix-x). Marriage celebrations could be even more elaborate further south, continuing for three days (Rose and Brown 1911:263); these, too, would have been opium-growing peoples. Marriage was a key venue for the display of household repute through feasting and exchange of bridewealth for those with wealth, one of the few opportunities for competitive feasting.

Cross-cousin marriage, particularly patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, was valorized although rare (Fraser 1922:ix; Dessaint 1972a:146; Durrenberger 1971:16; Hutheesing 1990a:106-108, 160; Maitra 1993:149-150). In some districts in northern Burma and Yunnan, one FZD/MBS marriage was practiced in each generation, so that marriage was tantamount to an exchange across generations. However, there was no evidence of superiority of wife-givers to wife-takers, as among some Kachins (Fraser 1922:ix), an indication of the egalitarian relations in marriage among the Lisu of northern Burma and western Yunnan. In fact, it is difficult at first blush to figure out if someone had truly married a patrilineal cross-cousin because the same term, *lo³-piyo⁵* is also used for anyone who is a potential mate from a different lineage.

By and large, however, most Lisu young people chose their own partners, and negotiations occurred for the sake of "propriety" (Rose and Brown 1911:263); although this is counter to Fraser's observations that marriages were arranged (which might have been due to his perspective as an American missionary or because he worked further north in Yunnan). At community activities and rituals, boys dressed beautifully in turbans, cowries, and swords and competed to work hard in order to impress girls. Rose and Brown wrote about observing one

young couple “slip away” together at the dance following a communal labor day and return to declare their betrothal. The role of the bride’s father seemed only to be to facilitate the marriage payments; the next morning, the father of the bride-to-be lobbied to have his prospective son-in-law work as a guide across the mountains for the British party in order to ensure that the groom had the resources to make a large marriage payment (Rose and Brown 1911:263).

Thus, bridewealth, both the brideprice and exchanges through feasting, appeared to vary with locality and economy. The brideprice amount was tied to social relations between the affines and/or to the wealth of the groom, that is, either to long-term marriage exchanges or to immediate status display of the groom’s family. Acceptable alternative strategies for marriage were elopement and, more rarely, bride exchange. Opium would have given young people more autonomy in marriage choice as access to land and this cash crop made young people less dependent on their parents for permission and the payment of bridewealth; bride exchange was infrequent due to the disposable wealth available through opium, allowing higher status marriages because of the availability of wealth.

Marriage within a “clan” was forbidden regardless of “actual” kinship. In some districts, certain clans were held to be related to others and marriage forbidden between their members. Marriage prohibitions appeared to these observers to be the only significant role played by clans in social relations (Fraser 1922:iii; Enriquez 1921:73; Rose and Brown 1911:268), although clearly this was not true for Black Lisu, for whom clan-based feuding was widely reported. Observations among Lisu in northern Thailand were in keeping with attenuated roles for clans and patrilineages, where most breaches of marriage rules were resolvable with a ‘fine’ added to the brideprice.

Divorce was said to be “impossible” (Scott and Hardiman 1983 I:(1) 588); adultery with a married woman was said to be a serious matter and her husband could ask for a substantial fine (Fraser 1922:v). Premarital sex was said to be very uncommon and having a child out of wedlock was a great disgrace; the father had no claim on the child and he was heavily fined unless a marriage could be arranged (Rose and Brown 1911:263).

Little of this conflicts with accounts of Lisu marriage in northern Thailand decades later, although it is so vague that it would contradict little. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, age at marriage was in the teens for girls and early twenties for boys (Dessaint 1972a:141). However, with the contraction of the opium economy by the 1980s, the average age at marriage had risen to 19.5 years for females and 24.1 years for males (Hutheesing 1990a:193), and had since risen even more.

A significant difference was bridewealth, which had increased greatly through the peak of the opium economy.

Table 5.1. Historical Bridewealth in the Opium Economy			
Year of Marriage	Mean Brideprice	Mean Groom Service (in years)	N
Evil Peaks Village (Dessaint 1972a:181, Table 20)			
Before 1910	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 50 ^a <i>baht</i> (old): 300 ^b <i>baht</i> (new) 889-1143	1.33	3
1911-1920	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 110 <i>baht</i> (old): 660 <i>baht</i> (new): 1956-2515	2.17	3
1921-1930	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 100 <i>baht</i> (old): 600 <i>baht</i> (new): 1778-2286	0	2
1931-1940	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 190 <i>baht</i> (old): 1140 <i>baht</i> (new): 3378-4343	2.33	6
1941-1950	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 208.5 <i>baht</i> (old): 1251 <i>baht</i> (new): 3707-4766	3.10	6
1951-1960	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 276.7 <i>baht</i> (old): 1660 <i>baht</i> (new): 4920-6325	0.48	12
1961-1970	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 340.2 <i>baht</i> (old): 2041 <i>baht</i> (new): 6049-7777	0.68	26

See the Tiger Village (Hutheesing 1990a:195-196)			
Before the 1960s	<i>phya</i> ⁵ : 373 <i>baht</i> (new): 2238	N/A	17
1960s-1970s	<i>baht</i> (new): 9,950	N/A.	32
1970s-1980s	<i>baht</i> (new): 16,944	N/A.	9

- ^a *Phya*⁵ is a silver rupee. One of the pre-1910 marriages involved payment in kind, consisting of an ox, three pigs, and a length of cloth.
- ^b The equivalencies in *baht* are based on research among the Hmong in the mid-1970s. Rupees were silver coins used throughout upland mainland Southeast Asia, called rupees after the British colonial silver coin. They were of high quality and often melted down for silver valuables such as jewelry and decoration for clothing, as well as used as cash. Eight thousand *baht* was worth 350-450 rupees in 1974, which comes to 17.78-22.86 *baht*/rupee. But the rupee had been re-valued from 6 *baht*/rupee to over 20 *baht*/rupee (Cooper 1984:138-139). Durrenberger (1971) does not give the equivalency for silver; Dessaint is not clear on this point, but it appears that silver coins were equivalent to a little over 10 *baht*. In this table, old *baht* are the pre-1974 value and new *baht* are the post-1974 value. Regardless of what a silver rupee was "worth", both Dessaint's and Hutheesing's data shows a considerable increase in brideprice in the mid-twentieth century and likely the entire exchange of bridewealth increased as well, given reports of large feasts of several days and legendary drunkenness. The 'scarf' money received during the wedding ceremony (given to the couple by the guests at the ceremony) increased from 519 *baht* for the older generation to 1,900 *baht* for their daughters (Hutheesing 1990a:196). The fact that the rupee was re-valued upwards to nearly 3 times its previous value further indicates an increase in wealth circulated at marriage, as silver rupees (and jewelry, made from melted-down rupees) were the main means of exchange (*baht* were not in wide circulation in the hills before the mid-1970s).

There are inherently inflationary tendencies to bridewealth because respect is gained by the relationship between what is customarily given and what is actually given (Collier 1988:97). Among the Lisu, what was customarily given was the amount that had been given for the bride's mother, and reputation was gained where the bridewealth was equal to or more than that. As such, one would expect a mild inflationary trend from generation to generation. The figures above indicate a far more rapid inflation in bridewealth (including brideprice, wealth exchanged at the marriage ceremony, and brideservice) than would be expected from the model, particularly in the post-World War II years. At the same time, opium cultivation had expanded considerably in the inter-war and especially in post-World War II years (McCoy 1972; Cooper 1984:104). The inflation in bridewealth was related to this increase in the circulation of wealth, allowing

households to display reputé through the main means of doing so, payment of bridewealth. While there was a ritual role for the bride's father's oB (*wu⁵ pha⁵*), there does not appear to have been a similar role for the groom's father's oB and the cash for bridewealth seemed to come from within the groom's household if for no other reason than that migration patterns often resulted in the groom's father's brothers not living nearby.

There was an interplay between brideservice and bridewealth in Lisu society, both in terms of systemic correlations and in household strategies, but there was no cut and dried relationship between the amount of brideprice and time of brideservice indicated in the above table. It is noticeable that both brideprice and brideservice were high from 1931-1950. Expansion of opium cultivation resulted in increased needs for labor in order to expand cultivation, as was evident in Dessaint's and Durrenberger's research. The way to wealth was through expansion of fields. Land was free; labor was the relatively scarce resource. Labor had high value, and a household that controlled the labor of productive adults was wealthy (Durrenberger 1983b). Marriage negotiations entailed discussion of brideprice, what was to be given at the feast, post-marital residence of the couple, and length of brideservice, if any. Fathers of brides sought as long a period as possible of brideservice. As it was 'customary' for a young man to live with the bride's family for up to three years,⁶⁹ any lessening of that time required payment of a fine by the groom's family, but if they were wealthy and powerful, it also enabled the groom's family to keep their son's labor and gain their daughter-in-law's as well. In this, marriage became a means of expansion of the labor pool, but also of the allegiance group of a powerful household. Longer brideservice increased the likelihood that the couple would stay with her family when they migrated. Yet brideservice could be onerous. Dessaint was awakened one night by gunshots and a man yelling "Stop him! Stop him!" A father-in-law had made such excessive demands on his son-in-law's labor and the rest of his wife's kin had taken so much of his opium as part of the

⁶⁹ Times of brideservice varied. People in Revealed River said that 1-2 years of brideservice had been customary, but a longer period could be negotiated.

marriage payments that the son-in-law had run away. The young man was retrieved and the headman and elders negotiated better conditions for him in the form of longer time to make marriage payments and less labor demanded (Dessaint 1972a:110, 130). For their part, boys sought to marry with a higher brideprice and avoid brideservice altogether, as they felt they would better benefit from expending their labor in their own fields for the benefit of their own household (Dessaint 1972a:180).

Transformations of Marriage in Revealed River Village

Age at Marriage

One of the significant changes in household formation in Revealed River Village was the increase in age at marriage. This phenomenon is often related to 'modernization,' particularly the education of women (Caldwell 1976:142; Ezra 2003), but this was not the case in Revealed River. Rather, it was part of a more general trend among the Lisu having to do with constraints on household resources, both in terms of access to land and the ability to accumulate bridewealth. I found that young women who married in Revealed River were in their early to mid-20s. It seemed that age at first marriage had increased in other villages in the cluster as well, although the pattern was not so clear as in Revealed River. In Chiang Rai, the phenomenon of later marriage was so severe that girls, shamed that they had not married by their 20s, ran off to the lowlands to work (usually ending up in some form of the sex trade) or committed suicide (Hutheesing 1990a:153-6, 168-171; Hutheesing, personal communication, March 1994). One incident of a Lisu girl who climbed a telecommunications tower and threatened suicide by jumping because her suitor was too poor to pay bridewealth for her was widely reported in the international media. The suicide was averted when the chief of police of Mae Sai (Mae Hong Son Province) promised to pay the bridewealth and host the wedding (Reuters 1998).

The mechanism at work in later age at first marriage may have been marriage and intergenerational wealth transfer, as argued in the demographic transition model, but I do not

believe the phenomenon of later marriage can be understood from a functionalist stance. Rather, strategies occurred at the household level. In the case of preindustrial continental Europe, access to resources such as a house or land is assumed to have been relevant for individuals in their decision to marry. This has been referred to as the niche mechanism, said to regulate reproduction. The assumption is that economic space is divided into a limited number of “niches,” or self-sufficient positions; the ability to marry required possession of such a niche, for instance, through inheritance; therefore, only some could marry and the population was limited (Fertig 2003). But niche transfers explained only a small fraction of the timing of marriages in the short run because market mechanisms overrode them, for instance, demands for wage labor, lessening dependence of children on inheritance from their parents. In addition, people of different classes practiced different strategies (Kinoshita 1995). In the end, “the niche concept may be rather understood as a familial strategy of small proprietors to control their children” (Fertig 2003: 13). Niche transfer mechanisms restricted marriage primarily in the context of state or communal policies to enforce regulations (Fertig 2003). In the Project area, land resources were constrained by the policies of the state toward upland watersheds; decrease in wealth was due to national and international drug production interdiction strategies. The carrying capacity of the mountains of northern Thailand has arguably been overwhelmed. But this was not a matter of ecosystem equilibrium. The carrying capacity of the region had been increased by the introduction of opium, allowing a flow of global wealth into the region that overcame previous limitations on local carrying capacity. State intervention had made it ecologically less possible for this population to continue to live at previous standards of living. Many people recognized this limitation in large part because it was a matter of state policy and intervention within one generation, resulting in very conscious strategizing on the part of individuals and at the household level.

“We are poor,” Lisu told me countless times, “When will we be allowed to grow opium again?” There were very real economic constraints with which households had to deal in establishing marriages and new households. It seemed that people were waiting for better years;

household heads (both fathers and mothers) were treating this as a short-term, temporary constraint. This was not an irrational expectation, given periodic repositionings of government policy in light of international policy, the flow of trends in development, and state bureaucratic politics. People were waiting – for land to help their children establish viable households and for the cash to pay bridewealth – and as a result, marriage was delayed.

Bridewealth

The proximate cause of delay of marriage was decrease in available wealth for marriage exchanges due to the contraction of the opium economy and loss of access to land. Bridewealth was very expensive as a result of its inflation in the days of the opium economy. However, the perception of decreased availability of wealth must be put in perspective by two factors: a decrease in the value of labor as a source of household wealth and reputé, and increased demands on use of household wealth for investment in making a living. In this economic context, Lisu parents could call on a cultural repertoire of marriage types that potentially cost less.

Amounts of bridewealth.

Every aspect of bridewealth was negotiated. Marriage and bridewealth payments wove together networks of relationships and obligations among households, all on variable time periods of half-finished transactions and pending payments, what Hutheesing called an “...unstable marital structure with oscillations between shame and reputé” (Hutheesing 1990a:106). The network of marriage often depended on other people getting married. If a young man’s family needed the bridewealth from a daughter to enable them to ‘buy a bride’ for a son, and most other families were in the same position, a kind of marriage gridlock occurred – with everyone facing the same constraints, there was no one appropriate to marry, especially since the qualities of a good spouse had changed somewhat. Both girls and their parents included such factors as access to land and capital in their evaluations of potential grooms. Bridewealth had apparently not decreased in response to these pressures, but it did seem that it had not continued to rise at the same rates it

had in previous decades (*cf.* Cooper 1984 on the Hmong). Despite the difficulties in establishing marriages, bridewealth had by no means decreased in the Thirty Thousand cluster.

Thirty Thousand had a reputation for being an area of high bridewealth; local lore had it that it received its name because the standard bridewealth payment was thirty thousand *baht*. While thirty thousand⁷⁰ was unrealistic, high bridewealth was indeed typical of the area, and that was in keeping with its role as a major opium producer in the recent past and reputed transit point for heroin. Bridewealth in Revealed River was typically 20,000 *baht*, which was high; it was, conservatively, almost 3 times the value of 35 years previously. In See the Tiger Village in the 1980s, ten years previously, bridewealth averaged around 10,000 *baht* and went as high as 20,000 *baht*, including marriages of widows and divorcees (Hutheesing 1990a:195). There, the elders complained of inflated bridewealth, which Hutheesing attributed to the heroin trade. One to two generations previously, it would have taken a Lisu one year to acquire the brideprice, but by the 1980s it took more than two years if they could have grown opium poppies (Hutheesing 1990a:178). As discussed in the previous chapter, opium gave a far higher return to labor than any other crop; the end of the opium economy severely reduced the wealth available for bridewealth.

Bridewealth could not decrease because of the Lisu culture of repute; to accept a lower brideprice than had been paid for the mother was a public concession of decline in status, a source of shame not only for the parents of the bride, but for the bride herself and for her children (Hutheesing 1990a:113). As is amply demonstrated in Hutheesing's work, loss of repute with economic disintegration has had profoundly negative impacts on Lisu conceptions of self, particularly evident in the increase in suicide of girls and young women and the disappearance of young men into the drug trade and addiction. At the same time, wealth still existed in segments of Lisu society where people had become involved in the heroin trade. In the cluster around See the

⁷⁰ I found the emphasis on thirty thousand interesting. Christian Lisu in northeastern India (migrants from northeastern Burma in the 1960s) asserted that marriage in the past had been paid for by 30 cows and 30 household utensils (Maitra 1993:149-150, 174-175).

Tiger Village, heroin trading villages were forming a marriage elite (Hutheesing 1990a:179). One might expect that marriages took place earlier in these villages (Dahal, Fricke and Thornton 1993). In Thirty Thousand Village, there seemed some evidence of differences in marriage exchange and feasting among villages believed to be involved in the heroin trade and those not involved, but I was unable to conclusively determine if this was the case.

The main signs of adjustment to economic hard times were delay of marriage and an end to the increase in bridewealth that had occurred over the previous 30 years. The lack of wealth for marriage was as much a matter of increased needs to spend household resources on other activities and items in order to make a living as it was a matter of decreased objective wealth, but absolute poverty was how the older Revealed River people conceptualized and spoke of it. When I refer to wealth, I do not mean to imply that these people had been wealthy by world standards – far from it – but that they had lived well, within their own conceptions of household repute and with relative economic security. This was not the case anymore. Other factors were involved in this lived experience of increased poverty, particularly the great costs and insecurity of subsistence. A used truck, for instance, cost 120,000 *baht* (approximately \$5,700 US in the early 1990s), so one truck was worth about six brides! The means by which households gained wealth was no longer through expansion of production but through capital investment – trucks, land, fertilizer, pesticides, education. In the opium economy, wealth had come through expansion of production by opening new land, and the key to that had been labor. In the post-opium economy, each year, households had to strategize the means to subsistence, and bringing another producer (with resultant pregnancy and the immediate experience of an unfavorable consumer/producer ratio) into the household was a lower immediate priority in the face of other needs for capital.

Forms of marriage and marriage ceremonies.

Given such constraints, households called on culturally appropriate strategies that might have been uncommon a generation before, particularly types of marriage that entailed smaller exchanges.

One form of marriage, full of repute, was a FZD/MBS marriage, a patrilineal cross-cousin marriage.⁷¹ Ai Yi's son's marriage was of this type. Another of the economies of bridewealth was in smaller, more frugal ceremonies. Hutheesing (Hutheesing 1990a) has written and spoken of the wedding feasts at which older women drank heavily and sang wedding songs all night. I only saw one such all night affair, at a nearby village reputed to be involved in the heroin trade; it was also on the trekking routes (opium and trekking were often associated, see Seewuthiwong 1989; Leepreecha 1997; Jinakul 1999). Interestingly, this was a bride exchange, a type in which bridewealth was not expected according to historical records. I attended the wedding feast at Revealed River Village and it was muted.⁷² The girls complained because there would be no all night dancing. My attendance, along with my sister (who was visiting), was the high point because we contributed 100 *baht* each to the couple to bless the marriage (scarf money). The return wedding a couple of weeks later was an extraordinary event with hundreds of people, older men singing the Lisu legends in one house; boys and girls dancing to the pipe in one clearing; and men and women singing the flirtatious counter-singing in another clearing. There was liquor, there was

⁷¹ Durrenberger found there was the skeleton of a moiety system. There had to be two clans or lineages in the founding of a village, and certain clans were believed to be more complementary than others (Durrenberger 1971:10-18; Dessaint 1972a:40, 93). However, all efforts at encouraging intermarriage among the two Lisu 'halves' of Revealed River Village had failed. I believe that the requirement of two lineages founding the village was related to the diarchic structure of villages in that the headman, a political position concerned with leadership oriented toward the outside world, and the *maw mong*, the servitor of the Village Guardian Spirit and concerned with blessing within the village, were separate and complementary (see Samuel 1993; Tooker 1996). One position each was held by the two main Lisu factions in the village.

⁷² In addition, drinking was strongly discouraged in Revealed River. This was in great contrast to previous reported behavior for Lisu. The Chinese had a saying: "Lisu for liquor; leeches for blood" (Fraser 1922:v). The Lisu were said to use millet or maize for liquor even if they were short of food (Anderson 1871:355; Forrest 1908:264; Dick 1987:36). They especially drank a great deal at weddings. In inclement weather or when there were visitors, it was the custom to drink heavily at the house of the most prominent leader of the village (Kingdon-Ward 1986 [1923]:204). Both old men and women drank, and far more than young people. People became quarrelsome while drunk (Kingdon-Ward 1986 [1923]:204; Fraser 1922:v). In Revealed River, one stated reason for the informal ban was an incident in which a woman died of alcohol poisoning at New Year. However, the other sub-text of discourse on alcohol was its increasing association with Thai identity. Many Thai forestry officials were very heavy drinkers, as had been the soldiers posted in the village. As Lisu associated drinking with Thai (and with their agents in the village, for instance the headman was frequently drunk and dangerous, a casualty of having to host Thai visitors), Lisu in Revealed River increasingly rejected it.

pork, there were mounds of rice, and no one from Revealed River Village; because they could not reciprocate, attending would have lost them repute.

I suspect that more elaborate marriage ceremonies in Thirty Thousand were held when the various Thai development agents were away from the village because the Thai, particularly Project officials, criticized the Lisu for any ostentatious display of status.⁷³ Most of the villagers were anxious to both appease the forestry officials and to exhibit poverty, although these practices were counter to the Lisu cultural logic of repute, because of the power the officials held over their ability to make a living. Thai forestry officials and mountain teachers judged Lisu status displays to be irrational. Nevertheless, small weddings could not be explained only by villagers' concerns about the opinions of Thai officials; there were very real, objective resource constraints on the degree of display.

The cultural framework of marriage practices allowed for a type of wedding based on minimal ceremony within the circle of the nearest kin. These were "spirit worship" marriages as opposed to "money on the altar" type marriages. Two of the four marriages that took place in the years I was in Revealed River were of this type, although the third held a small enough ceremony within the form of "money on the altar" that it was nearly indistinguishable from it. According to Hutheesing, "spirit worship" marriages were without repute as compared to the "money on the altar" marriages, but holding such a marriage did not prevent holding the larger ceremony later on. One woman in See the Tiger, whose parents-in-law had died and left her husband unable to make the final bridewealth payment, was working for her own brideprice for the sake of her household repute and especially the repute of her daughter when she married (Hutheesing 1990a:112-113).

⁷³ This was highly ironic given the amount of wealth exchanged in Thai marriage ceremonies among the middle classes, which practiced indirect dowry. 'Obligatory gifts' to the wife included a diamond ring, a house, and literally piles of cash brought in on silver platters. Frugality and self-sufficiency, however, were central organizing principles of the Project, keeping with Buddhist philosophy of the "middle path" and Thai romantic conceptions of rural communities (Nartsupha 1999). Many of the Thai working in the mountains were of lower to lower-middle class in origin. They had attended state technical and teaching colleges, not the prestigious universities. They had created an oppositional identity in which they rejected the social class hierarchies of Thailand, including demonstration of status through conspicuous consumption and wealth display.

This was a future-oriented investment, for her daughter's bridewealth would be determined in part by what hers had been no matter when paid or by whom. While no such specific strategies were expressed to me while in Revealed River, people spoke of many things as if they were waiting for better times, not just to carry out marriages, but to carry out the significant ceremonies and feasting that would demonstrate their reputation. Their strategies were informed by their imagined future.

An interesting point was the role of silver rupees. Silver was metaphorically associated with women and marriage. Prayers for blessing included the phrase "let the left hand have gold; let the right have silver" and "let there be silver in the sleeping room and gold in the eating place." Left was associated with male in this cosmological system (Durrenberger 1989:35; see also Hutheesing 1990a:112). Silver had been, for a time, the main item of bridewealth exchange. This was historically specific.⁷⁴ While silver certainly existed in the mines of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia, the amount of silver increased in the colonial period. This, along with dependence on a cash crop, made silver the prime marker of wealth in upland societies. Silver rupees, or *phya*⁵, were cash and used as such, although certainly symbolically important. In the 1990s, the silver rupees were not made any more and there was attrition due to conversion of coins to jewelry and pawning (Hutheesing 1990a:177) or sale of silver in order to buy rice and trucks, according to people in Revealed River Village. The beautiful black velvet jackets heavy with silver tear-drops worn by boys had disappeared, although the girls' vests remained. Supposedly some households had caches hidden, but the main currency had become Thai *baht*, part of a national cash economy, and countable. Corresponding with this change, bridewealth transactions took place primarily in *baht* rather than *phya*⁵, although *phya*⁵ was the preferred form.

⁷⁴ Silver coins in the shape of crescents had been used as early as the Tang Dynasty in China (these were known as *pua*, which is essentially the Lisu term for silver coins) and the Thai kingdoms after Ayutthaya used silver coins that looked like bullets. However, it was not until the period of European mercantilism that silver became the universal currency in mainland Southeast Asia with the unprecedented influx of silver brought about by improved extraction techniques and South American mines (Reid 1993:27, 99-107).

In a sense, therefore, silver rupees had become a form of valuable rather than currency, rare and highly valued as a symbol of women and marriage, and controlled by the senior generation. This, along with the sheer size of bridewealth, ensured a far greater dependence of children on parents to get married. It explains the pleasure of Ai Yi and his wife at being able to pay in *phya*⁵.

Marriage payments had become a barrier to marriage. Households faced a practical problem of how to accumulate bridewealth when there was less surplus from agriculture and greater need for investments in economic activities in hopes of finding something as profitable as opium had once been; when, in fact, labor did not reap the rewards it once had. These displacements in the context of shifting political and economic conditions transformed the resources available to households and were experienced as limits to household wealth and repute. They were not perceived as a permanent destruction of what they considered essential – establishing their children in marriage (parents) or getting married (children), maintaining autonomy, and displaying repute. Their strategies were oriented toward fulfilling their goals in the face of these conditions and as such, Lisu parents were able to draw on a range of strategies for bringing about marriage – bride exchange and lower status forms of marriage. But in Revealed River, the culturally appropriate strategies on which they drew did not include brideservice despite its prevalence just a generation before.

Brideservice.

Both brideservice and bridewealth had been possibilities, a point of manipulation in household decision processes and establishment of new households, thus the developmental cycle. Brideservice had been a way for young men without access to resources to marry sooner. And yet, in Revealed River, brideservice had not increased, as will be seen, due to perceptions of land scarcity. This shift in strategy had unintended consequences for political and kinship relations there.

Brideservice was a possibility in the continuum of strategies to get married. Young men without resources (orphans, an idiom common in courting songs, e.g., "I am an orphan, pity me...") had had the option to marry into a girl's family's group in the sense of living with the bride's father and working for him (not by taking his name). Fifty-five percent of respondents in See the Tiger village stated that grooms lived with the bride's family because they could not pay the bridewealth (38% stated that it was because their family had no son) (Hutheesing 1990a:196). This had been an appealing option to household heads because it increased the labor available to the household; rather than losing a daughter, they gained a son-in-law and the couple was hoped to be more likely to remain with the allegiance group after the negotiated period of service was completed.

In this sense, brideservice was a replacement for bridewealth payments, validating marriage in socially acceptable terms, by elders, as argued by Collier (1988). But as experienced by boys who got married, it gave them potential autonomy in establishing marriage, adulthood, and their own household when and where they chose. It had been at least theoretically possible for a young man to earn his bride almost entirely by his own efforts, whether through brideservice or by accumulating bridewealth himself. A young man could accumulate the capital for bridewealth himself by growing opium, although that would take a year or two; or he could marry a divorcee, widow, or a non-Lisu for whom no brideprice need be paid (Dessaint 1972a:150). Cooper gives an example of a young man supplying his own bridewealth; the young man's parents were opium addicts and could not buy him a bride, so he cleared and planted his own opium field at the age of seventeen. Such a son-in-law was welcome even if the bridewealth was lower because of the advantage of establishing a cross-clan relationship (Cooper 1984:138, 179). For Lisu, the potential independence of young men fit the coign of household autonomy under the opium economy: the ability to move to avoid authoritarian leaders; to avoid dependency or choose a patron oneself rather than be coopted; the ability to establish a household that was economically autonomous through the profits of opium and the availability of hired labor; and the trope of

repute. Goods could, indeed, be used to create or dissolve obligations, albeit only on a strictly contractual basis. Long-term obligations between two parties involved in exchange were always explicitly negotiated and Lisu did not accept that there were any implicit long-term social dependencies or debts involved, a point that often brought them into conflict with Thai (Durrenberger 1975). All of this had been supported by the wealth of the opium economy. The fact that brideservice existed and men could earn wives through their own labors put limits on the power of senior kinfolk over their juniors (Meillassoux 1972; Collier and Rosaldo 1981:289). But brideservice was rare in Revealed River in the 1990s. The lived experience of young men in Revealed River today is that they have lost independence, the ability to strategize and take action by themselves for themselves.

With the changes in the agricultural economy and increase in poverty, one might expect the incidence of brideservice marriage to have increased as young men sought to marry in the face their parents' household resource constraints or household decisions to invest household resources elsewhere especially since increasing labor was not as critical to household wealth as it had once been. This was the case in See the Tiger Village (Hutheesing 1990a:180), but not in Revealed River ten years later, where the opportunities for a poor or independent young man to pay for his wife himself had disappeared. I knew of only two recent marriages in which the groom had moved to the bride's household. In one case, the young man had been arrested for opium possession and was in the central jail in Bangkok. In the other, tragically, the groom had committed suicide. The young widow, Amima, attributed his suicide, at different times, to the ghost of a Lahu suicide that haunted that part of the village and to his unhappiness at living with her family, feeling both unwanted and overworked. Amima's family, affinally-connected to Kowboi's allegiance group, were poor and the groom himself had little or no family and no money. A year or so after her husband's suicide, she moved to the lowlands to look for work when her parents' home was destroyed by fire, the first woman of Revealed River to do so, and against village regulations. There, she worked as a cook for a "bee-keeping" enterprise, and while it was

hinted that she was involved in sexual relationships at that place (“bee-keeping” being a metaphor for sexual intercourse), her family strongly asserted that she was not a prostitute when she returned and the headman attempted to deny her entry to the village.⁷⁵

Other people in Revealed River began to use this case as an example of why brideservice was a bad idea. But the underlying reason for parents not accepting brideservice for their daughters became apparent later when girls from that allegiance group told me that they could not marry a poor boy without bridewealth. As one teenage girl put it, “my mother said it’s our custom to have the boy live with the girl’s family so that the mother can teach her, but we can’t bring husbands in any more. I have to leave my home because we have to save the land for our brothers. There’s too little land. So we have to marry a boy whose parents have land and move out.”

Boys needed to marry to become men and political actors in their own right. Given the particular type of economic change that had taken place in Revealed River, boys had become more dependent on their parents to provide bridewealth, which strengthened the authority of senior kin. At the same time, senior kin faced constraints in allocation of wealth among marriage and investment in agriculture and supplementary economic activities, made all the more essential yet tenuous by the demands of constrained land resources. Boys had to wait for their parents’ decisions in a way that they might not have had to previously. My experience with the marriageable boys and girls of the village is that they were somewhat obsessed with getting

⁷⁵ This led to one of my more interesting field encounters. When Amima first disappeared, her family was deeply worried. They delegated me to try to find her in town and bring her back, an impossible task in a city as large as Chiang Mai. I expressed my concerns about Amima’s fate to contacts who were Lisu activists at a hill tribes NGO. Through them, I met Dara, a Lisu woman who was working as a prostitute. Her clientele were primarily foreigners, which meant she had a lot of freedom (contrary to perceptions of prostitutes in the United States, these women do not usually have pimps, nor are they drug-addicted). She downplayed my concerns about Amima’s safety. “If she’s smart,” Dara told me, “she’s going to be better off.” She then described the benefits to prostitution from her point of view – you get payed to party, you get far more money than you’d ever get in the hills, it’s your money and you don’t have to give it to your fathers or brothers, and you don’t get burned and wizened by working in the sun all day long. Like many prostitutes with foreign clientele, she had a few long-term clients and hoped to marry one of them, a Swede, and move to Sweden soon.

married (and definitely obsessed with courtship!); many spoke of being deeply impatient to marry, as Turtle had been in the example that began this chapter. I heard of only one case in which a Lisu married without bridewealth, a college-educated political activist whose mother had died and father was an alcoholic; he married a woman outside of his ethnic group who already had children from a previous marriage. Thus modernization and globalization had increased the power of parents rather than that of the more educated and assimilated young.

Divorce

Marriage had been somewhat unstable in the opium economy, but for Lisu in villages hard-hit in the post-opium economy even long-term marriages had become unstable. While I saw little evidence of this in Revealed River, Lisu from See the Tiger and other villages in northern Thailand stated that “trial” marriages (marriages that broke up before there were children) had become increasingly common. Hutheesing frequently discussed divorce as a problem in modern Lisu life (Hutheesing 1990a:184).

It had not been unusual for first marriages to fail because of incompatibility or lack of interest in the spouses in being married. As most young couples married “for love” on the basis of very little acquaintance, it was not unusual for one or both to decide they did not like each other on closer acquaintance or because the parents found the marriage unsuitable (in one case, the groom’s parents thought the bride’s lineage had dangerous spirits). There were three divorces in Evil Peaks over a three year period, all among couples who had recently wed and did not have children; the bridewealth was not necessarily returned (Dessaint 1972a:140-141). Hutheesing also had several accounts of girls resisting marriage and running away shortly afterwards; in many cases the marriage was encouraged by their parents but the bride simply ran away to another relative. In these cases, what portion of the bridewealth was to be returned was negotiated (Hutheesing 1990a:116-117). Many of the elderly men in Revealed River admitted to having had a previous wife, briefly, who was “no good” or had “a bad mouth.” (None of the older women were

willing to admit previous marriages.) As often, one or the other of the couple simply did not like the other or were unhappy being married and ended it.

More recently, many marriages were ended by young women. Reasons young women gave for ending a marriage was that the man was lazy, did not work, was a drunk or an opium abuser. In one case, that of the headman's younger brother, his wife accused him of infidelity because of his activities in the lowlands. Marriage instability was often related to opium or heroin. While still rare, opium and heroin addiction were rising among Lisu young men, and was often given by young women as the reason for the end of a marriage. In the past, young men "played with the pipe," experimented with opium smoking in the years before they married. Such experimentation became far more risky when they used heroin, which was far more addictive than opium had been. With the outlawing of opium, heroin had replaced opium in all the ways that it had once been used in the village because it was easier to find and transport. As one senior Thai social activist put it, "The brackish water has been drained and replaced by salt water," and addiction rates had risen. Poorer families were at great risk for problems with opium. As discussed previously, a poor family could not make ends meet without opium. Young men became involved in the drug trade as couriers. The great risk was that they would start to use the drug they transported; the drug lords preferred addicted laborers as they were more controllable. In some cases, young men had become drug addicts; in others, they were jailed.

Hutheesing attributed the increased stresses and strains on marriage to men's loss of reputation, their inability to fulfill their obligations in hunting and marketing opium. Married women in the 1980s in Tiger Village felt that men were not fulfilling their roles in part because they could not hunt and did not bring the cash from selling crops home for the female head of household to budget for the household, as was her right and duty; rather, the men spent it in drinking, gambling, and buying things other than what she felt was needed (Hutheesing 1990a). Another factor was the labor demands of the post-opium economy. Although labor was not the primary source of wealth it once had been, that did not mean that men and women did not work as hard as ever – in

fact, they may have been working even harder. But that labor was worth less in terms of amassing household wealth (*cf.* Borgerhoff Mulder 1995). Much of these labor obligations fell on girls and young women, particularly daughters-in-law; girls and young women in Revealed River worked far more hours than calculated by Salzer (1993); they felt over-worked and under-acknowledged, working harder than ever for an uncertain future. An intriguing comparison is the example of a Lahu village in the late 1960s in which a high number of the young men left their wives, complaining of the burdens placed on them. They practiced uxorilocality and in-marrying men were expected to work for the bride's family. This village had been in one location for almost 60 years and depended heavily on opium, but the local environment was severely degraded and they were very poor (Jones 1967). The burden of compensating for environmental degradation by increased work was disproportionately born by young Lahu husbands and Lisu wives in these two cases. Lisu highly valued hard work – “if we don't work, we don't eat!” I was told. But work without the hope of future reward took its toll.

Choosing a Spouse

Historically, marriage among opium-growing Lisu was based on the personal characteristics of the spouse far more than creating inter-lineage ties, and marriage was primarily based on personal choice. Senior kin did not choose spouses for their boys; girls were not passive recipients of male interest. Most marriages were stated to be for love or at least attraction. Because young people had a great deal of choice in their spouse, the standards by which they evaluated potential spouses illustrates how social position created different marital interests (*cf.* Dahal, Fricke and Thornton 1993). In addition, fathers and mothers had slightly different interests in marital choice. There were both conflicting and converging interests among parents and children in marriage. Under the constraints of marriage in post-opium Revealed River, boys and girls needed to demonstrate to their parents that they were ready for marriage

and to potential partners and partners' families that they were worthy of marriage. They had to fulfill the expectations of Lisu society as expressed in family relations.

My information on current marriage choices came from girls and mothers of marriageable boys and girls; boys were not inclined to talk seriously with me (as I was classified as a single female and thus marriageable). Fathers of marriageable children would discuss the overall strategies of marriage with me, but far more generally and never when their children were near, due to family speaking taboos. What girls and boys talked about was rather different from what their parents talked about. Fathers and mothers had slightly different perspectives. Fathers, for instance, were far more likely to categorically state that Lisu were patrilineal and patrilocal. Mothers acknowledged this, but told me "*Ajarn* [Thai: Professor], that's true, but the thing we did was keep our daughters with us;" they hoped for uxorilocality for at least a year and to try to get their daughters married close by. In an essential way, they did not trust daughters-in-law to stay with them and care for them in old age.

New Year was the venue for all of the actors to evaluate the marriageable young. During the dancing, village leaders and older women took the opportunity to assess the prospects for marriage in their village. Who was beautiful, who danced well, who wore the family silver, who displayed repute? The old women sat on the sidelines and sang of the repute their village displayed through the dancing of the bedizened boys and girls. Boys and girls also carefully evaluated their partners; boys cut into the circle to dance next to a girl they liked, girls smiled and giggled and made sure they had a handkerchief ready in case a brother cut in next to her, as they were not allowed to hold hands in the dance. For several weeks after New Year, young men and mothers visited widely (both together and separately) – visiting relatives was a good way to meet and appraise girls as potential wives and daughters-in-law. In the past, final choices were typically made at "Little" New Year a month later, with the profit from the recently harvested opium crop funding bridewealth and immediately preceding the beginning of the agricultural year when labor would be needed.

Lisu stressed that their marriages were based on love. Love was based on “the mutual recognition of beauty,” beauty being pleasing facial features and clear skin, but also a pleasant personality (Dessaint 1972a:140), although Hutheesing disagrees that this was the basis for marriage (Hutheesing 2002). Ideas of beauty reflected practical interests in a spouse’s characteristics. Beauty was marked by the health and hardiness of the boy or girl and also by their dress, a reflection of household prosperity and repute. The characteristics desired of a bride were that she be beautiful – defined essentially as strong, healthy, with a round face, fair skin, and long glossy black hair – industrious, intelligent, agreeable and even-tempered, able to cook rice well, and that she display modesty or “shame” (*sha¹-taw³*). A girl who “wandered around,” immodest, sexually active, who traveled to town without her father or brothers, who argued, was proud and unkind or gossiped too much, was shunned; a girl who did not marry was assumed to be a bad girl (*cf.* Hutheesing 1990a:68, 101-102, 196-197 for further discussion). Maitra added that a good woman should not be greedy; be clean; and be smart and brave (Maitra 1993:156-157). In the 1990s, these were still the fundamental features of a “good” girl, although the increase in numbers of girls going to school or work in town (from other villages, if not Revealed River) meant that “wandering” was not as denigrated as previously. Beauty was shown through attention to personal appearance by both boys and girls. For girls, no matter how late they returned from the fields, no matter how cold it was in the mountain winter, they washed as soon as they returned and powdered their faces with perfumed powder after dinner, decorating their hair in barrettes and bows. A degree of boldness and self-confidence were greatly admired, in company with energy and industry. Intelligence and presence of mind were extremely important as well. A woman who had repute and brought repute to her household had to be able to plan, organize, budget, farm, and collect products in the forest. Potential mothers-in-law focused far more on attributes of virtuousness, hard work, cleanliness, obedience, and respect for her elders; it was especially important that a girl carefully practice the taboos among household members and kin. A “good woman” was defined by her traits as a potential wife and female head

of household; at no time was a “good woman” defined as a mother and girls were not evaluated by their procreative potential.

The traits of a good man were that he be industrious; not gamble, fight, smoke opium, or drink too much alcohol; that he not wander too far too often, for although men were acknowledged to travel a great deal more than women, a man’s first duty was to his parents and, in time, to his wife; be respectful to his elders and never speak “loosely,” foolishly or insultingly; loyal and obedient to his parents; kind-hearted and honest; and most of all, intelligent and bold. A good husband was also expected to hunt and to sell opium (Hutheesing 1990a:196-197; Maitra 1993:157). A boy’s good looks were important; the first requests I had for medication were to clear up the acne of marriageable boys. Older women viewed a good husband as a good manager, opening new fields on time; planting crops; marketing the crops; and bringing the money home, where she had rights in its allocation. Hunting was also an important male role, but in Revealed River in the 1990s this mostly fell to boys. A shaman was considered a poor marriage choice, due to the taboos on sexual contact, food taboos, and the alcohol consumption involved in shamanistic performance. So, too, with the servitor of the Village Guardian Spirit’s shrine; when the *maw mong* left Revealed River, many indicated that it was just as well as he was too young to have to forego sex as often as those rituals entailed. Girls and women also considered the difficulties of marrying a youngest son, as they would have to live with the groom’s parents for a long time. This women’s perspective was contradictory to the recent advantage younger sons had in acquiring land.

Girls liked boys who were smart, able to talk well (or, in the recent past, I was told, skillful at courtship singing); clean, healthy, and strong. Girls, even those who had been to school, did not specify they wanted an educated husband. However, they mocked boys who could not speak or read Central Thai; in practice, they expected at least minimal literacy in Thai. This was, in fact, essential to manage the household’s agricultural economy in the post-opium economy.

Parents' concerns revolved around the reputation of the household of a potential son- or daughter-in-law, particularly the economic viability of a household that their daughter might join and whether there were any addicts in the family. These indicated the possibilities for economic security and household reputation. Girls told me the Chinese in the village were wealthy because they bought all their rice, but risky husband material because of their predilection to opium addiction. Family alliance generally entered into consideration of marriage partners from a personal perspective (although in the one case of an attempt to join the two main factions of Revealed River by marriage, failure and conflict within the village ensued). Potential affines should be hard-working and agreeable; fair-minded, so as to negotiate a fair marriage exchange; and kind to their son- or daughter-in-law. The latter was a particular issue for daughters and mothers. Girls sometimes told me, looking over the other faction's neighborhood, that they would never marry "those people" because they beat their wives or did not adequately care for them when they were sick, which nowadays entailed taking them to the hospital. Mothers and their daughters, and sisters, preferred to live near each other after marriage to facilitate labor exchange, so women often preferred a groom from the village or near by.

A more recent constraint on marriage was the viability of the new household that would be formed due to the lack of land for agriculture. Marriage strategies of households entailed parents making decisions to ensure a good future for their children. Key in this was restricting access to existing land resources by keeping sons, especially youngest sons, and ensuring that daughters married out, settling with their husband's family. That is, rules of patrilocality had achieved new prominence. Not only parents worried about land availability; the younger generation did as well, as young women often told me in evaluating prospective beaux. Alema had a beau, a nice young man related to her father's allegiance group. He was cheerful and very hard-working, much more so than other boys his age because his father was ill. But, Alema said, she could not marry him because he did not have "blue card." Because he did not have legal residency in Thailand, this left him, technically, at risk of being forced to leave Thailand, but most of all it meant that he did

not have legal access to land. His ambiguous legal status vis-a-vis land in addition to his tenuous kinship and political connections within the village (his father was an in-marrying affine) meant that she thought her parents would not let her marry him. His was not a household of repute. These concerns structured decisions about marriage and post-marital residence. It also arranged their ideas about the people around them and how they dealt with each other.

Young women were constrained because their opportunities for marriage were subject to social judgment of them as good workers, and to abandon or defy one's parents was to gain a reputation as poor marriage material. Lisu used the concept of good behavior to denote repute (Hutheesing 1990a:160). A girl who did not work hard found it hard to make a good marriage. It often seemed to me that the adolescent and young adult females of the village carried the weight of most of their household's agricultural production on their backs. They spoke constantly of how much work they had done, seeking acknowledgment. While fathers, mothers, and brothers casually wandered in the forest hunting and gathering, or sat on the porches of houses chatting, the girls were laboring. In the off-season, girls sat on their porches or those of close neighbors (allegiance group or patrilineally related) and endlessly embroidered new gaiters; sewed new belts and dresses on sewing machines; and made the hundreds of colored strings with pompons that made up the tail that adorned the back of their dresses. This was how a girl showed herself ready for marriage, and worthy of it. The exception was that daughters-in-law worked even harder; I once heard a 17 year old girl gloat that since her brother had married she could take it easy because her sister-in-law had to do most of the work. In addition, marriage meant that young men began more concentrated agricultural labor, a point my 17 year old friend also gleefully took advantage of to spend more time at home.

Young men were dependent on their parents for bridewealth. Marriage without parental support (or an older sibling's, if the parents had died) was only possible through brideservice. None of the young Lisu men I spoke to believed they could ever earn enough money to pay bridewealth by themselves; "it's impossible" they told me ruefully. They had before them the

example of many Yunnanese Chinese and Lahu itinerant laborers, apparently with no family support at all, working in Revealed River. This was no life they wanted for themselves. Young people did not see themselves as having greater autonomy in spouse choices for two reasons: the Lisu history of choice in marriage (comparison to the recent past), and the lack of real alternatives to life in the hills with their parents (constraints on the imagined future).

Alternatives to Marriage

Despite their greater knowledge of Thai language and practices and possibilities for migration to the lowlands, children were not in an increased position of strength in marriage. This was the case for culturally specific reasons – Lisu cultural history, the opium economy, and the particular changes that had taken place in the mountains of Thailand – and for this reason was unlike other cases in which young people were in increased position of strength to choose spouses as a result of post-colonial economic changes (Borgerhoff Mulder 1995; Ensminger and Knight 1997). Complicated relationships between larger social change and marriage practices were significant in individual and household strategies (*cf.* Fricke, Thornton and Dahal 1998). The ebb and flow of power associated with different social positions had shifted. In this case, the young were in fact in a position of greater dependence and Lisu society had in some senses begun to resemble an “equal bridewealth” (Collier 1988) society far more than previously.

Migration had once been the main means of conflict resolution in Lisu villages (Dessaint 1972a). Decrease of available land and Thai state policies to sedentize upland ethnic minority peoples had resulted in a near-end to migration throughout the uplands by clusters of people who were allied to each other through kinship or marriage. In the 1990s, migration appeared to be more individualistic and oriented toward the lowlands, drawing off the poor and the young into illegal and quasi-legal employment, as was the case with See the Tiger Village. In Revealed River, conditions of migration were different, perhaps due to the solidarity of village institutions. Very few people migrated permanently from Revealed River Village, except for poor families, and

a few boys and young men; there were only two young women who left, probably working in the sex trade. Revealed River Village had the protection of the Project against many of the economic disasters of the transition out of the opium economy as seen, for instance, in See the Tiger Village. For these economic reasons alone, there was a lower percentage of young men and women going to the lowlands to work. People talked about the lowland towns and cities as full of interesting things, but also as dirty and hot. Most of all, they were profoundly uncomfortable in the lowland Thai context. Thai held many stereotypes about upland ethnic minority peoples (that they were promiscuous, never washed, and had tails), of which the Lisu were well aware. In most cases, people saw little to draw them to town. Wage work in the lowlands paid poorly and was unsteady. Furthermore, Thai labor relations were patron-client in form, but Lisu resisted the relationship of dependency, of older sibling/younger sibling, inherent in Thai employment. They sought far greater autonomy. Project leaders complained that Lisu laborers insisted on being paid on a daily basis but would leave as soon as they had earned what they wanted. The Project preferred Tai Yai (Shan) illegal refugees from Burma as laborers, people they could control and who were grateful for work, that is, people who could be made into dependents. Wage work in the town presented a model of autonomy and "freedom," a point that many young women came to talk to me about (using the Thai word *isara*, 'freedom'), but cut off from household and kin without the possibilities of achieving repute. Individual freedom meant leaving the web of social relationships and the creation of a new identity, which few young people seemed inclined to do no matter how dreamily they spoke of freedom from their parents' demands.

The impossibility or difficulty of making a living in the hills did draw Lisu from other villages to town. A number of Lisu made a living off of the tourist industry by selling handicrafts and performing shows, which allowed them far more autonomy than wage labor; was performed by people within their family networks; and in which they were not penalized for their difference by Thai and actually rewarded for it by foreigners. Of course, there was far greater potential for dissolution of existing familial bonds and social obligations toward each other in the lowlands. A

young Lisu prostitute I met, actively involved in the attempt to form a union for prostitutes, expressed a discourse of freedom from obligations. And yet, several Lisu from her village knew her and respected her; her relationships had not been dissolved, no matter how attenuated she might have depicted them as being. In another case, I was asked to translate between an elderly American and his very young Lisu intended bride by her mother, so that the mother could ensure that her daughter would be safe and cared for. The mother transferring mother/daughter household relations to the lowlands, even when marrying off a very young girl to an elderly foreigner. Their actions were structured by a prior text of household strategizing and management; they had yet to experience the unintended consequences.

One reason that girls and women did not leave (except for school) was that Revealed River Village had decreed that no young women were to go to the lowlands except in the company of a family member. The local rationale for this was fear of a returning woman bringing AIDS to the community.⁷⁶ Although young men frequently left the village for long and short periods of time, there was never any concern that they would contract HIV and infect the community. Note, also, the assumption that young women would be involved in the sex industry and that young men's sexual activity was unmarked. Any young woman who left by herself was forbidden to return to Revealed River. This was probably ultimately unenforceable. But girls felt that if they left, it would be virtually impossible to marry in the village; one of the two young women who left perceived her chances of marriage as spoiled before she left. In one case, a fairly well-educated girl was pressured by her father to go to town to work in his sister's tourist souvenir business and his daughter resisted vehemently. To her, going to town even with family support cut her off from her interests in the village, opened her to insinuations of prostitution, and marked her as unsuitable for marriage.

⁷⁶ According to a U.N. report released for the 15th International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, July 2004, every 10 minutes a person infected with HIV dies in Thailand. Out of a population of 63 million people, 600,000 are known to be living with HIV (Macan-Markar 2004). Village reactions to infection can be extreme (Nimmanaheminda 2004).

Discussion

The practice of marriage in Revealed River varied in significant ways from its practice under the opium economy. There was later age at first marriage. Bridewealth was still high, but brideservice had decreased. One point of negotiation at marriage, the choice between bridewealth and brideservice, had disappeared. With the decrease of the practice of brideservice, the practice of uxorilocality had also decreased; bridewealth and patrilocality had achieved prominence. In the transformed economic context of Revealed River Village, young men had become more dependent on their parents to provide bridewealth.

Choice of a marriage partner was not constructed within a structure of alliance in which senior men bestowed their daughters according to their political needs. The lack of enduring marriage alliance structures was likely related to the structure of the opium economy. I saw only one case of an attempted alliance marriage, arranged by the senior kin of the two major factions, but it failed and exacerbated conflict between the two groups. The case of cross cousin marriage could be interpreted as an alliance marriage, but the discourse surrounding it was of repute through good bridewealth (on the groom's family's side); consolidation of land and allegiance group relationships (on the bride's family's side); and love and personal choice (on the newly-married couple's and their siblings' side). Rather, Lisu marriage patterns can be described as "dispersed" (Strathern 1968).

There had been an inflationary tendency in bridewealth because respect (or, in the Lisu case, repute) came from exceeding the expected amount (Collier 1988), which was the brideprice paid for the mother of the bride. But other factors were also involved. The agricultural prominence of opium, a cash crop with a strong global market, particularly in inter-war and post-World War II eras when improved global infrastructure expanded the global market, brought about inflation in bridewealth and earlier age at marriage likely related to the need for women's labor (and men's, especially since boys did not work the fields consistently until they were married). The opium-growing peoples of northern Thailand tended to be marked by earlier age at marriage

than did non-opium growing peoples, even if of the same ethnic group (Wongprasert 1977; Kunstadter 1983). Dessaint also attributed high bridewealth to the increased demand for labor when Lisu increased opium production (Dessaint 1972a; Dessaint and Dessaint 1992). However, labor was not recruited through marriage in a simple and uncomplicated way. Aside from hiring Karen or Lahu labor, there was also the possibility of recruitment of labor through bringing in a son-in-law and affines into allegiance groups. The institution of brideservice meant that the bride's family had rights in the groom's labor as well, at least for a time, and the groom who desired to establish an autonomous household more quickly had to pay extra in bridewealth to avoid brideservice.

Marriage is the "product of strategies ... oriented toward the satisfaction of material and symbolic interests and organized by reference to a determinate set of economic and social conditions (Bourdieu 1977: 36). The strategies in the opium economy were to control labor and fulfill reputation with completed marriage payments. National drug control and watershed conservation strategies brought about a different set of strategies in marriage and household formation, resulting in later age at first marriage. Expansion of production had come to entail intensification, which led to alternative investments – diversification of agriculture and capital investments, or in alternative or supplementary enterprises. Recruitment of labor became a less valuable strategy for establishing household reputation because households could no longer expand production by increasing the labor pool to open up new land. Lisu perceived this as a surfeit of girls due to land shortages. But practically, as each household strategized, there were other things on which to expend household resources than bridewealth, at the same time as which the labor of daughters-in-law and sons-in-law provided less of a benefit than in the period of expansion of the opium economy.

In these conditions, we would expect an increase at age of marriage and decrease in bridewealth payments (Borgerhoff Mulder 1995:577-579). In northern Thailand, age at marriage was increasing, but bridewealth had not decreased for various reasons, including the cultural logic

of reputation and the involvement of some Lisu villages in the heroin trade. Hutheesing observed the rise of a marriage elite funded by heroin profits, but I did not see this in Revealed River. Rather, Lisu actors in Revealed River turned to other forms of marriage that were “reputation-able” in the Lisu frame, such as bride exchange and cross-cousin marriage. Alternatively, a lower status form of marriage ceremony could take place with the hope of carrying out a higher status ceremony in a better future that they hoped would replicate the past. All of these were part of the Lisu cultural repertoire of strategies that had been practiced infrequently in the opium economy when high bridewealth marriage had been possible, albeit not as full of reputation as bridewealth marriage. Shifting economic contexts transformed marriage practice from an emphasis of one element to another within the same framework, a point of manipulation that had not been necessary to practice when opium profit was available.

The fact that labor was less valuable did not mean that boys and girls, young married men and women, worked less than they had, they in fact probably worked harder but without the rewards previously available. There was no alternative to marriage in running off to the lowlands, based on the lived experience of Lisu as disparaged minority peoples and on their cultural framework of how to achieve adulthood, an autonomous household, and reputation – all of which depended on being married. Similarly, parents’ cultural obligation to ensure that their children married structured the possibilities of their practice. The desired results within the Lisu cultural framework of reputation were not always possible and there was a “degeneration of reputation” in many places (Hutheesing 1990a). In places such as See the Tiger, there was a very high rate of girls and boys entering the sex and drugs trades, along with high rates of suicide and HIV. In Revealed River, households had been able to manipulate the structure by using previously uncommon forms of marriage, fulfilling their culturally-formed obligations in satisfactory ways.

Later age at marriage and decrease in brideservice and uxori-locality can be examined for how they functioned, but that does not mean we can take a functionalist stance. Bridewealth served to limit or expand the rate of marriage and reproduction depending on conditions. It was

the fulcrum or the valve that regulated relations between household formation / biological reproduction and land / available resources. But bridewealth did not have that function, even though it was a real, if unintended consequence of bridewealth in Lisu society. Lisu cosmology contained these assumptions, linked to economic conditions: power flows from wealth; wealth is the result of productivity; wealth leads to repute and power (Durrenberger 1989:32). Repute was based on wealth and achieved through hard work, but also contingent on the ability to get children married and the ability to get children married was based on the ability to achieve a certain level of production. When that level of production was not achievable, then households waited. And so, households in Revealed River were to some extent still awaiting the return of the opportunities they had once known. Later age at marriage not related to the decreased value of labor in a simple intentional or functionalist sense. Rather, households made strategic, adaptive decisions within objective conditions and according to their understandings. Strategies in these conditions were to wait or to make use of different forms of marriage.

It is worth considering what alternatives there were to the hegemonic marriage structure. Girls' marriage strategies were re-oriented toward consideration of citizenship status and the possibilities of the groom having good access to land. Boy's marriage strategies of marrying by dint of their own efforts, through their own opium field or brideservice had vanished. They could still consider marrying a divorcee or widow for whom there was no brideprice; or marrying outside of the Lisu ethnic group. A more radical response would have been to move outside of the Lisu cultural framework, as was the case in conversion to Christianity. Christianity forbade both bridewealth (Maitra 1993:155-156) and sacrifices to the spirits and ancestors, so that Christian households were able to invest household resources elsewhere (Hutheesing 1990a:182). This was a big attraction of conversion among the poor, and for those who sought to jump to a completely different framework, as in See the Tiger Village. Conversion to Christianity was uncommon in Revealed River; I met only one male household head who had converted. This man told me of how his children had successively sickened and died until he could no longer

afford to make sacrifices to his ancestors to save his children. Impoverished, he turned to Christianity. Christianity was cheaper, he told me, more suitable for poor men like him, and would allow him to eventually accumulate wealth because he saved so much by not making ancestral sacrifices. On the other hand, this was a household of no repute in the village and his surviving children were mercilessly teased by the other children for his choice. It all depended on whether one sought repute. Similarly, marriage to a Lahu or Akha woman made marriage possible, but brought no repute. The reputable options in effect incorporated boys as young married men into the hegemonic marriage structure of Lisu.

In these particular, local, conditions of new constraints on marriage, power had subtly shifted toward parents. Parents held control over land, cash accumulation needed for bridewealth, and silver as a prestigious scarce valuable. Boys were more dependent on their parents to provide bridewealth; girls had to work harder in order to attract a marriage partner. There was less opportunity for boys to open their own fields and earn much of their bridewealth or demonstrate their suitability for marriage; and the option of brideservice had closed as well. This sounds like a bridewealth society (Collier and Rosaldo 1981; Collier 1988). Boys' and girls' adherence to culturally-approved performances of hard work to demonstrate their readiness and suitability for marriage could, indeed, be seen as part of a hegemonic marriage structure.

However, Lisu society in the opium economy did not adhere to such categorizations of brideservice / bridewealth societies in most respects (Collier and Rosaldo 1981; Collier 1988).⁷⁷ It

⁷⁷ There were other points in which Lisu society in the opium economy did not adhere to the brideservice / bridewealth models. There was no cultural construction of women in terms of reproduction and pollution, nor were gender relations based on men's ability to appropriate women's labor through the ritual/cosmological system. I certainly observed this among the Kwaio of the Solomon Islands. Their constructs seem far more appropriate for the Pacific and perhaps Island Southeast Asia. Lisu ritual did not focus on renewing male energy against women's various uses of it; women's spheres of ritual power did not emphasize femininity. Rather, as in brideservice societies, all humans were viewed as independent and reliant. Women were not valorized for their procreative abilities nor as mothers. Boys generally did much less work than girls, spending their childhood until marriage running around in the forest hunting. The main status difference for boys was whether or not they were married; marriage allowed them to become political actors, as in brideservice societies. Gifts exchanges were not a significant element of Lisu society, at least to a far less degree than I had noted in other societies such as

is true that marriage payments from the groom's family to the bride's family secured rights to a woman's production and reproduction and placed the groom in a relationship of debt to the senior kinfolk who had provided the young man with the means by which to achieve adulthood; and that indebtedness was often repaid by work (Collier and Rosaldo 1981:278-9), but this was all contractual in basis and there had been no enduring culturally sanctioned obligations. Boys and girls achieved adult status through marriage, but Lisu culture is constructed so that parents' status was also established by their children getting married. Furthermore, the lived experience of boys and girls can not be dismissed. They, like the senior men, had a legitimate interpretation of their society upon which they acted. Boys and girls had a great deal of choice in their partners and there was very little parents could do to enforce a particular marriage (especially one that endured). Parental power had been extremely limited in the opium economy. A boy could marry

the Kwaio. There was, rather, a tendency to save (or hoard), perhaps as historical accident of the environmental and political instability of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia and reliance on regional trade networks. Bravery and personal courage (BS) were important personal traits, as was respect (repute) (= BW). As will be seen below, marriage and affinal relationships were a very limited basis for political power. Rather, there were faction leaders who helped their followers in disputes but lacked the power to give orders as there were no dependencies on which to build leadership and little basis for economic control. Such faction leaders did not hold feasts, conduct warfare, or organize interregional trade (although there's evidence that the Lisu of Nujiang were involved in such political structures). There was a considerable drive to achieve parity rather than power over others. Conflict resolution was extremely difficult if the conflict occurred among people of different, opposed, factions and the main means of conflict resolution was to move away. In this context, the most important point was to refrain from provoking others even by talking about them; damages were paid as restitution for gossip. There was no reference to rules and obligations; resolution depended much more on the talking ability of the parties involved. The brideservice/bridewealth model can be successfully critiqued in terms of attributed causality (marriage vs. the prestige system) leaving the categories of BS/BW intact (Kelly 1993). Certainly some of the aspects scrutinized in the BS/BW model are very useful; they are 'good to think.' However, the categories of BS/BW themselves are too rigid for the case of the Lisu, in which we see other permutations of the dynamic interaction of the key variables than envisioned in this model. The dynamics of relationships of hierarchy and egalitarianism, dependence and autonomy, accumulation and exchange, are differentially amplified or reduced by the position of Lisu on the periphery of regional states. In many respects, Lisu were "hill peasants" (Izickowitz 1951); their incorporation into global capitalist markets and the particular traits of the local opium production economy along with the varied cultural and political relations they had with local states interwove to create a diverse range of possible strategies resulting in dynamically shifting structures that are not well accounted for in the BS/BW model.

by earning all or most of his wealth through his own labors, even though he might establish temporary relations of dependence with a senior man for the elder's negotiating abilities or through brideservice to the father of his wife. But boys perceived this as being their choice and acted within the framework of their own autonomy. Girls distributed themselves more than being distributed by their seniors. They could marry much as they wished; there had always been someone other than a boy their parents preferred to take them in marriage. Boys and girls were valuable and the social field was fluid. Marriage did not generally result in alliance (except in a restricted sense to be discussed below). Historically, there were few specialized valuables of great symbolic value to which elders had privileged control. Wealth was in the form of cash (silver rupees or local currency) or in opium, which could be used to buy things or pay for labor or bridewealth, just as was cash. The nature of the political ecology – the environmental suitability of opium, the value of the crop in the world market, access to hired labor to overcome labor constraints – allowed everyone, including young people, access to the means of production and achievement of autonomous households of repute. The obligations of juniors to seniors (or dependency of juniors on seniors) were therefore shallow and limited. This was congruent with a practical ideology of autonomous households. Ritual supported this in that no household was dependent on another for access to the spirits. Migration was based on open access to land, which also allowed young households a great deal of play in their strategizing to achieve autonomy and repute. From the perspective of those actors, they had the means to avoid dependence and establish autonomous households. This was not mere mystification or misrecognition. An ecologically appropriate crop, a ready market, and open lands – the opium economy – all created economic conditions that in practice gave boys and girls the opportunities for autonomy by avoiding most dependency on elders in order to achieve prestige in their cultural system (here, 'repute') if they labored.

The reality of the power of boys and girls in the opium economy is further demonstrated through the substantial changes in the past two decades. By the 1990s, land was not open

access and labor was not the means to wealth; means of production required substantial capital investment; bridewealth had become a limited resource; silver rupees were no longer a form of cash but a specialized valuable in the hands of the elders. In keeping with Meillassoux's argument (and Collier's variation of it) that senior kin controlled access to the valuables needed to marriage, this had become somewhat true in Revealed River. They did not distribute women, but they could limit opportunities for marriage by their control of wealth and valuables – in part through enforcement of the ideologies of patrilocality and patrilineality.

Allegiance Groups to Patrilineages

A final shift in social structure in Revealed River was that from predominance of allegiance groups to relationships based on patrilineal ties. There were a number of mechanisms by which this was brought about. One was the de-emphasis on brideservice, a significant means by which affines had been incorporated into allegiance groups. This can be related to concerns expressed by parents and their marriageable children about land tenure and post-marital residence, but it can also be attributed to shifts in the kind of labor relationships that were more effective in the post-poppy agricultural economy. Practically speaking, this meant increased reliance on patrilineal kin in daily life. However, patrilineal kin relationships were also imbued with a hierarchical moral force through ritual, language, eating taboos, and cultural expectations of obligations that made it socially important. It was not that patrilineality became predominant; it had been ideologically dominant (at least to men) even in the opium economy, but rarely practiced. With shifts in economic and political conditions, patrilineality became not merely spoken of, but practiced.

There was also a move toward virilocality because of lack of land and this was an intentional strategy on the part of parents of marriageable children. Parents constantly worried about where the land for their children was going to come from. Children of marriageable age were well aware of these problems as well. Constraints of land and citizenship status of possible

grooms greatly reduced a girl's choice of marriage partners, especially if her parents were concerned about the viability and security of their child's new household.

Allegiance Groups

In the opium economy, allegiance groups were the most salient domain through which households interacted with each other on an everyday basis. Households were linked as nodes into relationships of mutual care and services through allegiance groups, which structured inter-household relations on the basis of siblingship, marriage, friendship, or alliance with a powerful man. At its most fundamental level, allegiance groups entailed exchange of agricultural labor, sharing a rice mortar and making liquor, and depending on each other for emergency needs. They also cooperated in rituals that allowed status display and required extra-household labor, such as weddings and soul-calling ceremonies. There were no other elements keeping the group together, such as obligatory, formally defined shared ritual, co-owned land, or the continuity of genealogical ties and these alliances did not last beyond a generation nor across space, often morphing at times of migration.

Allegiance groups expressed the political interests of households, united by their support for a faction in political and legal disputes in the village (Durrenberger 1970b:18; Dessaint 1972a:44, 342; Hutheesing 1990a:70, 72, 161), depending always on perceived need and utility to the participants. Allegiance groups were, therefore, inherently friable and the dynamics of their formation and dissolution created the dynamics of village growth and dispersal, related to the cycle of agricultural productivity in an area. Productive areas brought wealth and repute to households; such households attracted alliances; settlements expanded rapidly. Thirty Thousand in the late 1960s was one such area (Durrenberger 1970b). Where there was 'no repute' – due to conflict or low productivity – people left (Dessaint 1972a). As Dessaint wrote:

Migration, then, is an integral element in this dynamic social organization. Migration is a means of realigning social relationships. Each move is an opportunity to cooperate with or separate from other individuals or households within the potential social field. Frequent migration gives the advantage to a

small, easily mobile social group such as the household to be the basic unit of Lisu society. The egalitarian nature of southern Lisu society rests largely on the continued ability of each household to seek to improve its social, political and economic position by migrating into a more favorable environment (Dessaint 1972a:48).

Composition of the groups changed over time and depending on the nature of the task (Dessaint 1972a:44, 48; Hutheesing 1990a:161). A household could belong to more than one allegiance group at a time, for instance if it was in a village where both parents of the husband and wife lived. The boundaries were shifting, informal, and unstable (Dessaint 1972a:44). Multiple and cross-cutting claims for affiliation and the potential for shifting allegiances in the context of migration "...allow[ed] the individual household a great deal of flexibility" in their alliances (Dessaint 1972a:48). No group was in a position to induce more permanent allegiance or create dependencies (Hutheesing 1990a:161). As such, allegiance group relationships had to be constantly renegotiated. This was in keeping with the profoundly egalitarian nature of Lisu social relationships in the opium economy.

The allegiance group often consisted of a core of siblings of more or less equal status or affines and others attached to a powerful, wealthy man for a period of time.⁷⁸ In this, allegiance group leaders were more like big men than patrons in a patron-client relation. Allegiance group relations did not occur in a stratified society and all members considered themselves at least potentially equal; the relationships were not enduring; allies could and did leave whenever they were dissatisfied; there was little substantial wealth difference between the allegiance group leader and his allies; the position was by no means inherited; the leader was not seen as superior, nor was there any discourse of his superiority, especially since *repute* was not a limited good. He became a leader by his hard work, demonstration of his managerial skill, and his ability to speak well and forcefully, that is, through his charismatic personality. Practically speaking, an allegiance

⁷⁸ Remember that wealth and power arose out of the stage of the household developmental cycle, so this would be a man with adult children, surplus labor, and the ability to accumulate surplus wealth. Leaders also attracted an allegiance group through being the first to settle a newly-opened, highly productive opium growing area, as Thirty Thousand had been.

group leader was most likely a wealthy man in the opium economy because he was a mature man, with a household at a mature stage in the developmental cycle, and surplus labor to manage. It was, therefore, ephemeral wealth and power. Those in his allegiance group were attracted by his demonstrated *myi*³-*do*⁵, and got blessing from being near him. On the other hand, leaders or headmen sometimes gained more political and economic control through privileged contacts with Thai officials, serving as middlemen in the opium trade, and negotiating exemptions from Thai anti-opium laws. In this, a headman could serve as a patron. Lisu were notoriously resistant to such power, however, and stories of the murder of headmen are legion. In the post-poppy economy, these political and economic relations have changed. Wealth has become inheritable. The headman of Revealed River was the son of a notorious and powerful headman. The current headman had, in effect, inherited his position along with a considerable amount of capital. He also had far superior contact with Thai officials, which has put him in a powerful political role in the village. But note that this occurred on the cusp of the transition to the post-poppy economy, when opium profits were, if a household was at the right stage in the developmental cycle, converted into capital for the new economy (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Despite its contractual basis, the allegiance group was referred to by its participants in kinship terms as *ni*¹, which technically meant siblings (the children of one mother and one father). While it appeared as a male, political domain, it was common for allegiance groups to form around sisters, their father, and the sisters' husbands (Dessaint 1972a:44, 48). Sisters' everyday cooperation in domestic and agricultural labor thereby became the basis of allegiance groups; through the regular exchange of labor, they reinforced and validated the allegiance group as a work group and as a kinship-based group, albeit not patrilineally-based. This group then attracted affinally-related, or even non-related households.

A significant source of members of an allegiance group was in-marriage men who performed brideservice. In the days of the opium economy, both the bride's and groom's families attempted to keep the couple with them. The terms of brideservice were negotiated at the time of

the marriage. The matrix between brideservice/bridewealth, uxoriocal/patriocal was a point of manipulation between the bride's and groom's parents, and the bargain made about who lived where and for how long was a matter of relative authority and the strength of the allegiance groups of the bride's and groom's households. A household with much repute – productive agriculture, wealth, blessing – was much more likely to keep the couple. This was possible because of conflicting principles of patriocality and uxoriocal post-marital residence. Despite the ideology of patriocality, uxoriocality was recognized as appropriate for at least a delimited period of time, ranging for a period of 1-3 years, until the wife's father died, or after children were born to the marriage and the couple moved out to their own house. The conditions required that the couple migrate with the bride's father; to fail to fulfill these conditions meant that a fine had to be paid to the bride's father. As a result, many couples lived uxoriocally (Durrenberger 1971:10-18, 44-48; Durrenberger 1976b:303-305; Hutheesing 1990a:124). The practice of brideservice made it possible for productive and wealthy (therefore by Lisu definition powerful) families to induce the couple to stay after the term of brideservice was completed; members of the son-in-law's family might join them, giving rise to the affinal basis of allegiance groups. Thus countervailing tendencies between lineage and allegiance, based on the principle of seeking repute for oneself and one's household, was used by local 'big men' in bringing affines and allies into his orbit. The means to attain wealth and power was through manipulation of social and labor relations within the framework of allegiance groups (Dessaint 1972a:49). People were attracted to a 'wealthy' household as a source of blessing, one with repute with which other households could have relations that brought them repute (Durrenberger 1976c). To fulfill the expectations of other people, to have repute, a person had to have access to wealth. If he was generous and if other households had repute in a place, then they received blessing for further wealth, and they stayed together. Clearly, the repute of a wealthy household had much to do with agricultural productivity and the labor within the household, that is, mature households in the household developmental cycle were far more likely to attract an allegiance group, the more so in that they had sufficient

labor to exchange. Yet this also made them unstable. With changes in economic conditions or a man's senescence and inability to maintain relations of repute with his followers, the allegiance group would break apart.

Allegiance groups were especially important in legal and political disputes. Because there were few effective overarching social institutions active in the village, disputes had to be handled by negotiation. A powerful man could negotiate disputes among members of his allegiance group, but there was no one who could negotiate disputes between members of different allegiance groups; it was difficult to reach an admission of guilt much less a settlement (Durrenberger 1976c). The powerful men who held such groups together had few functions outside of attracting followers and mediating disputes among them. Trading and feasting were occasionally shared on a contractual basis. They did not organize warfare, as there was none at this time (Dessaint 1972a:49).

Occasionally, a strong and domineering headman arose and even united several villages. But such authoritarian leadership was rarely stable. Lisu resented headmen who attempted to assert too much power. Although the usual reaction was migration, they were infamous for killing importunate headmen. Lisu of Ban Lum reported the killing of such a headman shortly before Durrenberger's arrival. In Fang, one Lisu headman gathered great power with the support of a local Thai official and was eventually assassinated. Others also reported violent ends to headmen who became too powerful (Dessaint 1972a:36-37; Durrenberger 1976c; Lewis and Lewis 1984; Hanks and Hanks 2001:88). This reflected Lisu concepts of honor, respect, shame, potency, and autonomy – in short, the set of meanings that constituted *myi³-do⁵* – as pointed out by Durrenberger, but also the type of political and economic relations Lisu had with the lowlands in which they rejected patronage and maintained autonomy vis-a-vis local states (Jonsson 1996b).

Patrilineages

The structural principle of patrilineality appeared to be far less significant than the allegiance group in the time of the opium economy. While the dominant ideology, it had little practical reality as observed by Dessaint and Durrenberger, and other social structures were as likely to be salient in everyday life. Practice in Revealed River in the 1990s differed considerably from practice in the opium economy as patrilineages emerged as a more salient structure. This arose out of changes in marriage, adaptation to land tenure conditions, and the end of migration.

Historical Evidence of Clans and Patrilineages

Unsurprisingly, colonial explorers and missionaries were particularly interested in “clans” or lineages among all the people they encountered, in keeping with their orientation toward tracing “blood” relations of different societies to each other. There was a great deal of localized variation in clan names so that even though all found evidence of clans, they found very little consistency in naming throughout the territory in which Lisu lived. Their lists of clans (eleven in one case, twelve in another) had an overlap of only three names (Rose and Brown 1911:268; Enriquez 1921:73). In districts in which Lisu and Kachin lived together, Lisu took Kachin names for their clans (Enriquez 1921:73). There were many Lisu with Chinese clan names who claimed Chinese descent, but also many Lisu with Lisu clan names who also claimed Chinese descent. There was no connection between clan and territory; lineages were not landholding social units. Fraser disgustingly concluded that one could not determine descent by virtue of clan name (Fraser 1922:iii). The only function of clan names appeared to be marriage prohibition. In the end, these observers decided that Lisu clan names had little more significance than British surnames. Given how widely scattered Lisu were, it appeared that only localized kin groups could have been important in everyday practice.

Patrilineages in the Opium Economy

In Lisu villages in the northern Thailand in the opium economy, patrilineages (Lisu: zo³), again, existed but appeared to be organizationally unimportant in large part because the members of patrilineages were too dispersed to function in the village; they did not hold land, they organized economic action only minimally, and patrilineages were less important for political action than allegiance groups. Reckoned genealogies were shallow, in keeping with the rapid rate of migration dispersing members of the patrilineage non-contiguously across the landscape. They were important locally mostly for exogamous marriage and in ritual, particularly recruiting help in performing ceremonies. Durrenberger termed these localized patrilineages. Again, researchers noted their diversity in putative ethnic origin; a few were said to be pure Lisu and the rest either Chinese or Lahu in origin (Durrenberger 1971:10-18; Dessaint 1972a:26; Durrenberger 1976b:304; Hutheesing 1990a:158-159). Nevertheless, to be Lisu was to have patrilineage, and in-marrying Lahu or Chinese created a patrilineage for themselves in accordance with this cultural code, with particular ritual consequences discussed below.

Patrilineal relationships were especially likely to be activated or at least cited in certain contexts, such as migration. Dessaint claims that the migration decisions of a household head were most influenced by senior patrilineal kin (Dessaint 1972a:40), at least those near whom he lived. One reason given for migration was the need to be near patrilineage mates for their assistance in carrying out rituals. When visiting a distant village, a man sought out people of his lineage; due to ritual differences, it was safer to stay with them rather than risk offending another lineage's ancestor spirits (Durrenberger 1971:10-18). As a reserve to increase or absorb populations, kinship relations provided nodes along which population could redistribute itself in the landscape (Dessaint 1972a:23). But in the context of the opium economy, most people were welcome anywhere relationships could be found or formed. Women, as I observed in Revealed River, also strategized to live near female kin in order to share agricultural labor and child care in ways that they would not or could not with co-resident affines with whom they did not share

obligations as potentially binding as with their mothers and sisters (a patrilineal relationship through the husband of the mother and the father of the sisters).

People talked about patrilineages as if they were important, and patrilineal relationships were at least an idealized behavior and referred to in discourse about relationships. As such, it provided a moral authority for relationships outside the household. Lisu talk about their allegiance groups used the idiom of kinship, the term used being *nei*¹, siblings of one mother and one father (Dessaint 1972a:44), although, interestingly not of the patrilineage (*zo*³) even though patrilineality is implied in the siblingship relationship. This was pronounced enough that Dessaint was led to believe that patrilineal relationships were at the core of allegiance groups (Dessaint 1972a:44). However, his data in Table 4 shows that only 36% of households were patrilineally related to the core leader; 51% were related affinally; and 13% were unrelated. Of the patrilineally related allegiance group members, one was a FFYBS, a quite distant relationship in Lisu terms; others were daughters of the leader and their households. Furthermore, lineage membership could be changed in particular cases. A *maw mong* at Evil Peaks changed his lineage from his father's to his mother's lineage because the latter was numerically larger at Evil Peaks and he thought that this way he would better represent the village; in other cases, a bride changed her lineage in order to permit a marriage with an otherwise forbidden lineage mate (Dessaint 1972a:145-147). Thus, allegiance groups arose out of the dynamics of the household developmental cycle in which agnatic relations were significant but not the solely significant structure. On the other hand, patrilineality was far more possible on the ground when a household head was mature and had adult married children living with or near him. This is further evidence of the cultural centrality of patrilineality. It was an ideal that was not achievable by everyone but always spoken of as the standard.

The ideological dominance of patrilineality was pervasive enough that it was difficult to determine the nature of a kinship relationship among people in an allegiance group. A man associated with Headman Red's faction told me they were brothers; on further questioning, it

eventually became clear that the kinship tie between them was attenuated at best, but that he worked with Headman Red because his father had been a close ally of Headman Red's father. It is interesting that the discourse of patrilineality legitimated the relationship. Dessaint believed that relationships among patrilineal kin within an allegiance group would generally be closer than affinal relationships (Dessaint 1972a:44); while this may well be true, in some cases the patrilineality could arise out of the relationship as a model for close cooperation.

There was a concomitant ideology of patrilocality; even with brideservice, uxorilocality was deemed temporary. As a Lisu woman sang, "There is no tradition to stay in father's place." A woman became a member of her husband's patrilineage, at least theoretically; a Lisu metaphor states: "A woman is a leaf on the tree of men" (Hutheesing 1990a:115). Women's mobility was limited in terms of patrilineality and patrilocality; a woman was not supposed to visit households not related to her husband's patrilineage, who were supposed to be her closest neighbors (Hutheesing 1990a:72, 85, 92), or in practice, outside of her household's allegiance group (which might not have been patrilineal in composition even if constructed as patrilineal in discourse). Patrilineality was lived through kinship idiom as well. Avoidance taboos were based on patrilineal kinship. Most elderly women in the village were called *a¹-zara⁵* (FM); when a household lived uxorilocally, the children called their MM *a¹-zara⁵* rather than *a¹-phu⁵*, the usual term for MM (Hutheesing 1990a:123-124). Thus, patrilineages existed ideologically, expressed in discourse and kin terms.

The issue of whether patrilineages existed or not for Lisu is muddled by our conceptions of what a lineage should be. Thus, previous researchers on the Lisu recognized that patrilineages existed because Lisu talked about them as important in their social relationships, justified strategies in terms of them, and used kinship terminology that expressed patrilineality. But Dessaint and Durrenberger, particularly, struggled with the very real lack of patrilineages' everyday existence because they did not objectively exist by the standards of the concept of unilineality in the literature of the time – agnation was dispersed, members of the patrilineage did

not own property together, decisions were not corporately made, genealogy was often shallow (four or at most six generations (Dessaint 1971a:93)), and there were no detailed clan histories (although Hutheesing (1990a) disagreed; my understanding of the stories sung at weddings was that they were clan histories but with details of places traveled through rather than a list of people and names). Rather than conclude from this that unilineality does not exist (Kuper 1982), it is more useful to consider in what sense patrilineages existed for those people, the Lisu, who spoke as if patrilineages existed, and look at what other social structures were in play with or against patrilineages. Patrilineages, certainly according to adult men, were a fact of Lisu life, but there were countervailing social structures, such as uxorilocality (deemed temporary) and women's control of the domestic sphere and desire to exchange labor with sisters. Given the dynamics of the household developmental cycle, control of labor as a means of expansion of production, and the wealth of opium and the possibilities of migration, conditions arose in which the countervailing social structures of uxorilocality and sororal labor exchange were more congruent with fulfilling the goal of household reputation. It is more useful to evaluate patrilineages as the Lisu saw them than to essentialize them as proxies for territory, blood, and political structure. In the opium economy, patrilineages existed much as a privileged model for extra-household relations arising, perhaps, out of the model actualized within the household.⁷⁹ In this, they were experienced most immediately in daily relationships among local agnatic relatives or in discourses of allegiance group co-members the constructed themselves as being a type of patrilineal kin.

Nevertheless, patrilineages existed as descent structures and this was experienced in daily relationships with deceased ancestors of the patrilineage through the medium of ritual. The patrilineage was widely dispersed due to the vicissitudes of migration in the opium economy, so that local agnatic relations dominated over deep patrilineal relationships, but patrilineal

⁷⁹ This is not to say that there was projection of "sentiments" onto more distant relations and the "jural domain", cf. Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard and Fortes. Such an understanding reifies the distinction between intra-household (domestic) and extra-household (jural, public) domains.

relationships were nevertheless instantiated in ancestor rituals carried out in the household and among members of the localized patrilineage members. These were shamanic rituals; marriage ceremonies; and funeral ceremonies. Every Lisu had to be a member of a patrilineage, and for most (not all), their relationship with their ancestor and lineage spirits was an essential element of their ritual and sense of security in a dangerous world full of animist spirits ranging from distant ancestors to the lord of the land and the spirits of the fields, mountains, streams, rocks and even the spiny porcupine, all of whom made people sick when offended. When a young groom performed brideservice he felt uncomfortable because he was parted from his lineage spirits living in his in-laws' house. No such discomfort or ritual danger was reported for women living patrilocally as her husband's lineage spirits also protected her. The wedding ceremony included bowing to the ancestors of the bride by both the bride and the groom, said to be a recognition that she was being taken away to her husband's patrilineage. Nevertheless, a woman did not give up her relationship with her ancestor spirits nor they with her – her deceased parents, older siblings, and more distant lineage spirits could either protect her or cause her illness, just as her husband's lineage spirits did for him. Shamans of her natal patrilineage would be consulted if an illness was not resolvable through contact with her husband's patrilineal ancestors.

Despite the dispersal of patrilineages, a discourse of the oB/yB relationship and particularly of the oB as a senior male of the lineage deserving of respect was pervasive. The Village Guardian or Old Grandfather Spirit has an assistant, his younger brother. The Old Grandfather spirit fulfilled the role of the older brother in the spirit world and toward those living in the village; he took care of the people (and domestic animals!), was the guardian of morality, was consulted when disputes could not be settled; the younger brother assisted him, sometimes with amusing results (Durrenberger 1971; 1989). When visiting a different village, the visitor was supposed to seek out and pay their respects to his FoB (*wu⁵-pha⁵*) in the village, assuming he had patrilineal kin in that village. The older brother of the father of the bride led negotiations and was referenced throughout marriage songs as the one 'giving' the bride and receiving the bridewealth

(Hutheesing 1990a). This does not mean that the oB was always materially involved, due to distance and dispersal of agnatic kin; if no older brother was actually available or if he was not well-spoken, another male elder served the role of speaking for the group. There was, however, no discourse on the groom's side of the role of the FoB. Nevertheless, agnatic links were central to the organization of Lisu society. In cases of divorce, sons ideally stayed with their father's patrilineage.

Descent relationships were most clearly expressed in people's relationship with their ancestors. Most Lisu households had ancestor altars in the house, opposite the central entrance to the house from the verandah. On this shrine, set above a sleeping platform for senior males, were two shelves on which were placed several small bowls, and at times when a ritual was about to be or had recently been performed, paper prayer flags, incense sticks, and string. The number of bowls had to do with both the depth of the lineage and whether descendants had been told to keep or remove a bowl for a particular ancestor spirit. In general, when people died they got a bowl on in spirit altar. On one shelf were the bowls for the deceased mother and father of the male head of household ($a^1\text{-zra}^5$ and $a^3\text{-pa}^3$), although in at least one household bowls were placed for the deceased parents of the female head of household as well. There were also bowls for the grandparents of the household head; there might be bowls for deceased adult siblings (male or female), in all cases I observed for older siblings of the household heads. Collectively, these are the ancestor spirits, also known as the house spirits ($h^1\text{-ku}^3\text{-nei}^5$), but most commonly referred to simply as $a^3\text{-pa}^3$ or $a^1\text{-zra}^5$ just as elderly men and women in the village were called $a^3\text{-pa}^3$ or $a^1\text{-zra}^5$ by the youth of the village.

On the other shelf were bowls for the lineage spirits known as $nei^5\text{-za}^3$. After three generations, the house spirits became $nei^5\text{-za}^3$. The most junior of the lineage spirits was the FFF, called $a^3\text{-pa}^3\text{-mo}^5$ (as is the Village Guardian Spirit) and it is this lineage spirit on whom people depended the most. $A^3\text{-pa}^3\text{-mo}^5$ was most frequently called on to intercede with the abundance of other spirits in the Lisu cosmology and appealed to in soul calling ceremonies when

a person's soul is lost, evidenced by malaise and inability to work. *A³-pa³-mo⁵* communicated with people through shamans, and was most likely to have been the lineage spirit to call a man to be a shaman. In contrast, the house or ancestor spirits could make people sick, but they did not communicate with their descendants through the shaman but only through the lineage spirits that possessed the shaman. Nevertheless, all of the household altar spirits (ancestor and lineage) were called on to protect and care for household members. If they failed to do so, their descendants accused them of having no repute and senior lineage spirits chastised the junior lineage/ancestor spirits if they did not aid the living with accurate information about which spirit had been offended and what rituals to carry out to make amends for the offense. Indeed, if lineage spirits did not take care of their descendants, they lost their power (*do⁵*); in a sense, if they did not work, they did not eat.

Some lineages only went as deep as the grandfather of the household head (*pei-pa*) (Durrenberger 1971:58). These were 'Chinese' or 'Lahu' lineages, said to be founded within the last three generations by a Chinese or Lahu man married to a Lisu woman who took on Lisu ethnic identity. Because everyone in Lisu society had to have a patrilineage identity, they formed their own lineages (this inflow of people incorporated into Lisu society through these cultural codes can be seen historically, I believe, in the variety of patrilineage names throughout the Lisu population in northern Thailand, Burma, and southwestern China, many of which seem to have been derived from place names, *cf.* Fraser 1922).

Shamanism was another venue that demonstrated the role of lineage spirits in Lisu life, through the selection by the spirits of a shaman and by the way shamanic ritual was used to cure illness. A shaman (*nei⁵-pa⁵*) was a man chosen by a lineage spirit who made him sick with a specific syndrome of seizures, grinding of teeth, seeing visions, speaking unintelligibly, passing out, weakness, and inability to work. As word of the man's condition spread, shamans in the area approached the novice shaman to initiate him. In this initiation, the senior shaman called his own lineage spirit and the spirit then questioned the initiate about the skills, powers, and hierarchy of

seniority of his lineage spirits (Durrenberger 1989). There was then a group possession in which all of the shamans underwent possession at the same time. For his first formal possession, the neophyte shaman was first be 'ridden' by the most junior of his lineage spirits, the Great Grandfather ($a^3\text{-}pa^3\text{-}mo^5$) and then by other lineage spirits who wished to communicate through him. The role of the senior shamans was to protect the neophyte from being possessed by dangerous spirits, such as jungle spirits and the spirits of lineages other than his own. Following this, the junior shaman continued to train with a senior shaman from his own lineage, or as the Lisu put it, the spirits of the senior shaman instructed the spirits of the junior shaman, for the initiation is not so much to train the shaman as to train the lineage spirits (Durrenberger 1971:53-57; Durrenberger 1989). In shamanic rituals, lineage spirits possessed the shaman in the order of their power and seniority.

Because the most junior spirit eligible to recruit and possess the shaman was a great grandfather spirit, Lahu and Chinese lineages did not have shamans because their FFF was not Lisu.⁸⁰ On the rare occasion when a member of a lineage with no lineage spirits showed all the signs of spirit possession for years, the neighboring shamans determined from their spirits that he was indeed selected to be a shaman, and his lineage was upwardly recalculated to allow him an $a^3\text{-}pa^3\text{-}mo^5$ (Durrenberger 1989). I suspect that this had occurred in the case of the Yipha lineage shaman.

Shamanic rituals are by their nature public performances (shamans do not become possessed by themselves and for themselves), making them an instantiation of patrilineal relationships among the living and the dead. As it was one's own lineage spirits that either made one sick or allowed one to become sick, and because it was their role to protect their descendants, it was the lineage spirits who were consulted at any serious illness. In calling on a shaman to communicate with the ancestors, there was a hierarchy of resort. The closest kinsman

⁸⁰ They would have had recourse to other means of divination or called for help from a shaman in another lineage; this made them dependent on the good will of shamans in other lineages and likely more vulnerable to unresolved conflict with spirits.

who was a shaman would regularly be consulted, but in cases with no ready resolution, increasingly senior shamans were called on. Married women might call on a lineage brother if it was thought that her own patrilineage spirits were involved (see examples in Durrenberger 1989). At New Year, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Laoyipha lineage held several large rituals in which their local members consulted with their ancestor and lineage spirits to ensure that all was in order for the coming year. These rituals took place starting at the house of the senior shaman for the patrilineage and progressed down to the most junior shaman. These were widely attended by members of the local patrilineage and as such were a venue for the enactment of agnatic relationships with the living as well as with the dead, the ancestral and lineage spirits.

In addition, patrilineages were said to have distinct personalities. Dessaint gave the example of the Fish and the Bee lineages in Evil Peaks Village. The Fish lineage was known for its diplomacy and the Bee for its quick tempers. As such, they were considered a good team for dealing with local spirits (1971a:41). Representatives of at least two patrilineages had to settle in a new village to balance each others' personalities.

Patrilineages in the Post-Opium Economy

In Revealed River, patrilineages had gained new prominence. The two main factions in the village were, at their base, allegiance groups that had been concretized by the processes of incorporation into the national Project and the constraints on land and migration. But processes were also underway in which they were becoming more patrilineally structured than had been the case in Evil Peaks. The mechanisms by which this occurred was attrition of affinally- or alliance-related households from the village and a tendency toward patrilocal post-marital residence.

For example we can look at the Laoyipha lineage. It was the lineage of the headman, an official position that was supposed to be elected but was in fact appointed by Project officials. The lineage had been founded in Revealed River by the headman's father, a powerful and aggressive leader. This lineage was represented by four brothers, their wives, and children; the headman's

mother and an unmarried daughter; one sister and her husband and children; and one other man and his family, who claimed patrilineal kinship with the headman. These latter two households lacked sufficient land and capital. The sister's family was not closely allied with the Laoyipha lineage in legal and political disputes, and in fact appeared to avoid political life in the village. The man who claimed patrilineal kinship on examination was found to have a rather attenuated connection based on a past alliance between his father and the headman's father.

Within this lineage, however, the eldest brother of the Laoyipha lineage had his own diffuse allegiance group. He was considerably older than the other living sons and widely recognized as very "traditional" or old-fashioned. He was the shaman of the lineage, although rarely consulted. This was the father of Turtle. His eldest daughter had married and brought in her husband, but he was in jail in Bangkok on a drugs charge. A number of households were associated with this household, but shared only minimal daily activities. In particular, they did not share a rice mortar as a group. Most of the Laoyipha lineage, in fact, did not use a rice mortar because they bought most of their rice. The women gossiped and complained about each other constantly. They did attend New Year shaman ceremonies and carry out ritual together, and identified themselves to outsiders (me), by their lineage and relationships to people in it (the headman, the shaman, the store owner, the truck driver, that is, the four brothers).

The Yipha lineage was led by Kowboi although another man was the head shaman of the lineage, and still another had been the servitor of the Village Guardian Shrine. The structure of this group more closely resembled the largest of the allegiance groups discussed by Dessaint in Evil Peaks in that they shared two rice mortars – a sure sign of allegiance – and attended extra-household rituals. Those households with daughters exchanged agricultural labor on an almost daily basis. The core of this lineage grouping was patrilineal, however. Kowboi's three married sons lived in his neighborhood with their wives; of the married daughters, all had gone to live patrilocally. Just next door was Kowboi's yB, Ai Yi, who had two sons and three daughters. The sons had married and settled patrilocally, although the eldest had vanished into drug addiction

and his wife and children had since returned to her mother's house in another village. Ai Yi's second son was the one who married his patrilateral cross-cousin; like Kowboi's daughters, his married daughters lived with their husbands patrilocally. There was another cluster of two households near Kowboi's homestead. These were patrilineal kin but not deeply involved in daily labor exchange with the central core of the faction, possibly because they had few daughters living with them.

In addition, five to six affinally-related households lived here in the upper section of the village, one being Kowboi and Ai Yi's Z, her husband, and their children (one of whom married Ai Yi's second son). The sisters-in-law were very close; now past the age of regular agricultural labor, they spent their days sewing, cooking, and rambling through the forest collecting herbs and vegetables. The rest of the non-patrilineally related households tended to be poor and/or young. These were among the families who left Revealed River just before or near the beginning of my stay. In one case, the family's stated reason for leaving was that the mother was over-worked with young children. She moved to join her sister's family in Mae Hong Son so that they could share field labor together; she went to visit and then told her husband she would divorce him if he did not join her. People told me that, faced with care of five young children alone, he moved. In another family, the father converted to Christianity, supposedly to avoid ritual obligations (he told me killing pigs and chickens all the time was ineffective and expensive; others spoke of him as a man who could not fulfill his obligations, a man without repute). A third was the family from which a young groom committed suicide; his widow later moved to town to work.

A shift in relationships among households had occurred and patrilineages had emerged as more prominent in Revealed River than had been the case in Evil Peaks or Ban Lum. A great deal of this was due to a renewed emphasis on patrilocal post-marital residence. Lisu explicitly placed this in a framework of conserving limited land resources for the household, particularly its sons' present or future households, the descendants of the household. One of the main means by which allegiance groups had been built up was through use of affinal relations. In the post-

poppy world, such affinal relations were no longer an advantage to the leader of an allegiance group. The choices made to ensure the future household of children and response to shifts in land tenure had resulted in a very conscious choice to favor patrilocal and, concomitantly, patrilineality. Patrilineality was a core cultural principle, but who had the power, when, and how, to bring about this ideal social form had also shifted between the opium and the post-poppy economies. In talking to men and women, young and old, about marriage choices, I was struck by a difference in statements made between elder men and women who had daughters of marriageable age. Elder men universally stated that Lisu were patrilineal and patrilocal. Women with marriageable daughters, and often their daughters, started out saying that their tradition was that women could not stay. But, they would then point out, it was also their custom for the young woman and her husband to live with the bride's family for a period of time after they married and listed the reasons why it was better for a daughter to stay with her family for some time after marriage: the most prominent was that brides were young and still needed to learn; their mother-in-law would not care for them and might even mistreat them; or that the young husband might turn out to be bad. At the root of it, it seemed that mothers would miss their daughters and were concerned for their welfare, and as the person in control of the domestic sphere, women had had the power to bring this about. Lisu cultural principles recognized this, and in the opium economy this practice could be preeminent. As political and economic conditions changed, the power to bring about uxorilocality had decreased. With regret, parents refused uxori-local marriage.

Stronger localized lineages in Revealed River were supported by cultural principles of lineage organization. While not often activated in the opium economy when lineages were dispersed non-contiguously across the landscape, the principles still existed as a part of the cultural imaginary and instantiated in ritual practice, as legitimation for relationships, and as a set of strategic practices depending on contexts. In the case of Revealed River, increasing resource scarcity (particularly of land), decrease in the value of labor in building household wealth, and decrease in cash available since the end of opium cultivation also increased local lineage

solidarity, if the households of that local lineage had land. This presented a different set of problems, of conflicts and shared interests among people, than had existed in the recent past. It meant that some lineage members had to be cut out, particularly daughters and their husbands. For land-poor groups, there was an increase in disintegration as they married or migrated out to areas with more land. At the same time, increasing resource scarcity made individuals increasingly dependent on their parents and siblings for access to resources and, by extension, on their lineage mates, who tended to be kin who could be recognizably enumerated and expected to fulfill the cultural obligations of patrilineal relationships.

Patrilineality under Conditions of Resource Scarcity

With national and international intervention in the highlands of northern Thailand, Lisu and other ethnic minority peoples there experienced the end of migration, contraction of land resources, and enclosure of land by state and development agencies. Concurrently, there was a re-emphasis on patrilineality within Revealed River. This is in keeping with literature that stated that unilineal kinship is associated with restricted land because it functions to delimit rights to access to scarce resources by keeping certain classes of people out and giving priority to a set of people defined by descent (Firth 1959; Meggitt 1965).

Meggitt's claim of a pattern of a functional relationship between unilineal organization and scarce land resources was hotly disputed on the basis of the complexity of these systems, their variability, and the difficulties in operationalizing variables to test the hypothesis (Barnes 1967; De Lepervanche 1967; Kelly 1968; McArthur 1967; Strathern 1968). It since been revised by Frechione and Scaglione, who found a general cross-cultural validity for the hypothesis (Frechione and Scaglione 1981). Historical research (Shipton 1984; Glazier 1985), and longitudinal research (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999; Wohlt 2004) have since upheld the correlation and discussed the mechanisms by which this occurs.

Lineages as a Conceptual Category

A key point in this discussion is the validity of lineages as a conceptual category. Most importantly, we can ask whether such a thing as lineages “really” existed. Were lineages chimera of the British structural-functionalist mind (Kuper 1982)? Was the idiom of descent as applied to group composition completely arbitrary (Sahlins 1965:97)? Certainly British colonial explorers and missionaries in northern Burma sought social groupings based on “blood and soil” as a proxy for political organization, and expressed frustration that Lisu had no functionally significant form of lineage. Similarly, both Dessaint and Durrenberger concluded that lineages had no functional reality in Lisu political structure and little in social structure beyond exogamy,⁸¹ although they recognized the importance of ancestor rituals. Therefore, they concluded, lineage model was of no relevance to understanding Lisu social structure. And yet, descent and lineage have failed to go away, persistently re-appearing in peoples’ representations of themselves and in their strategies (*cf.* Rivière 1993; Hviding 1993).

In the Lisu case, the specific features of lineages can not be assumed on the basis of British Africanist models or the permutations noted for the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the two significant loci for the anthropological discussion of lineage. Lineages are culturally specific. We must understand lineages as they are in the societies which claim them, not as models. Lisu lineages were not corporate, as a result of their history of migration and dispersal. If that means, by definition, that they did not have lineages, then the Lisu would be very surprised. Lisu talked about lineages as if they existed. Even at their most attenuated, lineages were an important idiom for discussing social relationships and descent had reality in people’s practice, especially in ritual. Clearly, patrilineages were important in the social order of Lisu, even in the opium economy. It

⁸¹ Marriage within the patrilineage was punishable by the ancestors. In certain rare cases where a married couple’s patrilineal relationship was so far back that it could not be recounted, the marriage could take place by negotiating the payment of a fine paid along with the bridewealth (Hutheesing 1990a:106) and appropriate ancestral ritual that might include the bride changing her patrilineage.

was not that lineage was unimportant, it was that other kinds of social relationships were important as well. In considering the relationship between scarce natural resources and the prominence of patrilineality, I must conclude that Lisu did have ideologically and socially significant patrilineages, but the extent to which they were practically significant varied with ecological and political economic conditions. That is, this phenomenon must be understood not only in relation to population pressure but to the political ecology and as part of a dynamic process, by which structural principles became more or less functional and salient in the world as Lisu lived it.

Theory of Land and Lineage

The debate about the relationship between land and lineage originated in British structural-functionalism, in which the segmentary lineage structure of permanent, unilateral descent groups was considered the framework of the political system of relationships among territories. Lineage societies were intermediate in numerical and territorial range between very small societies in which even the largest political unit embraced all of the people, united to each other by bilateral ties of kinship, and larger societies in which the framework of the political system was formal administrative institutions. A lineage system united more people than the first and fewer people than the latter, likely because there was a limit on the size of population that could be held together under each type of political structure; this was not population density (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1940:6-7), a misunderstanding that seems to have entered the literature (see Fay 2003). In fact, the population density of centralized government systems tended to be lower than those of lineage systems; they concluded that a large population in a political unit and a high degree of political centralization did not necessarily correlate with high density (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1940:7-8; Shipton 1984:613-614).

Meggitt argued that “where members of a homogeneous society of horticulturalists distinguish in any consistent fashion between agnates and other relatives, the degree to which social groups are structured in terms of agnatic descent and patrilocality varies with the pressure

on available agrarian resources" (Meggitt 1965:266). His survey of highland Papua New Guinea "...supported the proposition that the degree of patrilineality is significantly associated with the availability of arable land" (Meggitt 1965:273-274). This was a synchronic systemic confirmation of Firth's observations over time in Tikopia, where he found that increasing land pressure resulted in "a division of land holdings by married brothers, a tendency to restrict the interests of married women in their lineage land, and a sharper definition of personal rights in land as against rights of other lineage and clan members. ... Tikopia unilaterality has been reinforced by [land] pressure" (Firth 1959:180).

Firth's analysis seems to have drawn little critical comment, but Meggitt's hypothesis drew much attention. The issue of how to define lineages arose, particularly that of whether peoples' claim to being agnates could be upheld by anthropological analysis of data (McArthur 1967). If people were not "really" agnates, then agnatic density was more apparent than real and agnation was not restricting access to land; if their lineages did not in fact adhere to the lineage model, Meggitt's argument correlating patrilineality with population pressure was spurious. Controversies about how to conceptualize and analyze social structures, particularly whether groups were cognatic or unilineal, abounded. It is in the context of anthropological understandings at the time that Sahlins could write "...there is no particular relation between descent ideology and group composition" (Sahlins 1965:104).

Criticisms of the critique of Meggitt's hypothesis could also be made from an ecological point of view. Many of these early discussions disregarded both the ways in which the environment is formed through human action and how political conditions structured distribution of resources. Environmental variables were often treated as passive, unchanging features. In an earlier assessment of the validity of the concept of unilineality, for instance, Barnes referred to ecological differences between Africa and Highland Papua New Guinea, but reduced it to the type of livestock and the existence of permanent tree crops or fertile and presumably permanently cultivated land, and therefore made it a matter of accumulation and control by lineages (Barnes

1962). Another criticism was that population pressure could not be operationalized. Indeed, it may never be possible to formulate a single rule valid for evaluating carrying capacity across all situations. Determining population pressure involves population densities, distributions, the productivity of the environment and of the mode of production, each complex in its own way (see discussion in Chapter 2, "Population Pressure"). All land in a given region was not usable to the same degree, so that over-all absolute density mattered less than local distribution of population (Kelly 1968:37; Shipton 1984:619). Even where resources were sufficient for the population as a whole, not every social group in the population had sufficient resources, for instance cultivating less productive or accessible plots (Wohlt 2004). Earlier criticisms of Meggitt's claim assumed unitary, integrated kinship systems. Strathern, for instance, made an underlying assumption that adaptation to stress occurs on a systemic or societal level (Strathern 1968). The goal was to determine which was the dependent and which the independent variable. Finally, demographic processes themselves have their own dynamic, complicating any ability to assign clear values and independent or dependent status to one factor or another (Kelly 1968:37-45). In one of the more carefully operationalized critiques of Meggitt, Kelly concluded that kinship structures were not a dependent variable in relation to population pressure; rather, "any given society's response to pressure on land resources is mediated by the existing structure and the established lines of co-operation within that structure" (Kelly 1968:63). There were viable alternatives for resolving local imbalances other than patrilineality.

These criticisms have been addressed in more recent studies with improved methodology and, most importantly, longitudinal research that documents the transformations in social structure between loose and tight lineal structure over time, in specific conditions. Meggitt's formulation of the relationship between kinship structure and land scarcity appears, in retrospect, to be inherently functionalist, whatever his intentions. It compared patterns of kinship and population density at an isolated slice of time, without consideration of the complexities of two inherently dynamic systems responding to changing conditions and each other. It posited a broad

association that was easily dismantled by consideration of the variation that existed in specific cases. Ecological relationships had been simplified in the model. Nor was any mechanism posited to explain how such an association came about. In the absence of such a mechanism, it left a simple functionalist relationship between kinship and resource management, as if one dependent system were adapting to another, independent, one. It is interesting that Firth's earlier observations on the rise of patrilineal kinship practices on Tikopia with land scarcity seems to have given rise to far less criticism; in that case, he had delineated the mechanisms by which the transformations occurred, and no necessary functional relationship between population, resources, and kinship were inferred.

Nevertheless, several studies operationalizing population pressure through different markers have shown an association between lineage and population pressure. A more recent and carefully operationalized world wide survey upheld Meggitt's hypothesis (Frechione and Scaglione 1981). Regional historical work upholds the general pattern (Shipton 1984). Longitudinal work showing how and when a society undergoes such a transformation in kinship structure and practices has also upheld the relationship between patrilineality and scarce land resources (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999; Wohlt 2004). These studies have also benefitted from more subtle theoretical conceptualizations that recognized the inherent dynamic processes of both environment and social system, and the processual interaction between structure and behavior. The underlying themes had been ideology and behavior, culture and environment, and which was dominant, as if the dynamics of the two were unconnected. Recognizing the extent to which neither environment nor social structure are mere dependent variables of each other was key to understanding what is, in fact, a clear correlation. These studies have used more careful conceptualizations of carrying capacity to assess population pressure. Population density had been used as a marker for what was essentially carrying capacity and population pressure, used in the sense of land scarcity (Shipton 1984:613-614). Carrying capacity as an analytic concept has proven difficult to quantify, but it can be observed on the ground. The perception of

availability and productivity of land is the key factor. People make a carrying capacity judgments about their resource base (Bayliss-Smith 1980). They can look at their fields and recognize that there will be insufficient land for their children or that productivity was insufficient to provide the level of resources that they currently enjoyed, as was the case for a fringe Enga clan (Wohlt 2004), and whether the land tenure system was viable or not given future expectations (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999). Intensification can also be a marker of increased population density (Boserup 1965; Frechione and Scaglione 1981).

Using such re-conceptualized assessments of carrying capacity, cross-cultural statistical analysis has shown that kin group discreteness, particularly patrilineality, was correlated with intensification of cultivation, marked by shortening of fallow; this stood for population pressure. Kin group discreteness was measured by formal kin authority, restriction of usufruct rights to kin group members, inheritance of land, and a sedentary settlement pattern (Frechione and Scaglione 1981). Using historical population figures, Shipton showed that the territorially unified patrilineages were found in east Africa only where there was relatively high population pressure and land scarcity. Systems organized on the basis of territorially defined chiefdoms and communities with political hierarchy were found in areas with lower population densities (Shipton 1984:613-614). Wohlt overcame Strathern's (Strathern 1968) stricture that Highlands systems of lineage and resource control were ultimately incomparable due to the range of variation through his careful use of genealogies and garden inheritance histories for one fringe Enga group over time. The number of individuals admitted to the group varied inversely with the density of occupation and the mode of incorporation (more distant affines and cognates vs. closer agnates) also co-varied with degree of density of occupation. "The degree of correspondence between the ideal alternative recruitment principles and relationships of hosts to incorporated individuals in practice covaries directly with the pressure on land" (Wohlt 2004). In lowland Papua New Guinea, longitudinal research among the Kubo and Bedamuni demonstrated that social relationships covaried with local systems of resource management; as land became scarce, the ideal of free

access to land gave way to an ideal of restraint, and affinal kin were far less likely to request or be given land (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999:374-375). In short, the pattern between unilineality and scarce land resources must be understood temporally and processually; as active agents, the people who enforce patrilineality or make use of friendships and affinal or matrilineal links strategize within the context of not only immediate limits to carrying capacity, but their evaluation of an imagined future.

In Meggitt's model, patrilineality existed in and of itself; it was assumed to be a unitary social structure. Much of the discussion around the association between patrilineality and scarce land resources failed to recognize other social principles that underlay the specific, observable social structure, without adequately considering the importance of incorporating non-agnates as a source of labor, for instance.⁸² The significance of this point is illustrated by the Lisu case in the opium economy, particularly the importance of labor constraints and the dynamics of the household developmental cycle as the primary limit on productivity. Recruitment of labor was also important for a fringe Enga group studied by Wohlt, as labor helped to clear new land for cultivation (Wohlt 2004) and may have been significant for small scale states in East Africa where the uneven spread of population due to the carrying capacity of the region led to migration of newly married sons neolocally into less populated albeit less fertile lands (Shipton 1984). Non-agnates are more than a group of people opposed to a unitary group of agnates; they are other, positively-valued types of people such as affines, matrilineal kin, and other types of people affiliated to each other through non-kin relationships such as exchange (Feil 1984:53). Stressing unity of the lineage conflates kinship with polity. But in fact, the relative emphasis upon alliance and descent varies depending on the context in which these ideas inform practice. In an alliance society such as that of the Kachin (particularly the *gumsa* Kachin), descent was a formative part of the polity and alliance through marriage an important part of political relations (Leach 1965

⁸² Strathern, for instance, posited the unity of clan in the face of warfare as a key factor in defining lineage in Highlands society (Strathern 1968). This was not a factor for Lisu, but increasing the labor pool was.

[1954]). But for Lisu, descent was not the main organizing political principle and marriage alliance did not create political relations. There were other organizing principles, all oriented around the repute of the household, which was closely associated with the regional political economy. These variations and interconnections must be related to concomitant structures and processes.

Interestingly, genealogical depth turned out to be of no statistical significance as a measure of kin group discreteness (Frechione and Scaglione 1981). We have, perhaps, valorized descent constructs such as genealogical depth, when they were simply features dependent on the local political economy (land, political rights) and regional relationships. For instance, *tee* exchange in the New Guinea Highlands can be linked to the historical development of economy (sweet potatoes, pig production) and exchange, which underpinned more inclusive, exchange oriented groups in the Western Highlands as compared to the more bounded and isolated groups in the Eastern Highlands (Feil 1984). Elaborate and deep genealogical claims to descent and lineage ownership of land have emerged in the context of land rights adjudication in Kenya (Glazier 1985). A classic example of variation between genealogical shallowness and depth in different political and economic conditions is the Kachin of northern Burma (Leach 1965 [1954]). In general, the dispersal of populations across northern mainland Southeast Asia would have hindered the association of territory with ancestry.

These discussions came down to issues of practice vs. ideology: Which was to define patrilineality? The case of the Lisu of Revealed River illustrates that the question “‘Is this a local group or a descent group?’ ... is too crudely phrased” (Strathern 1968:39) because of the shifting dynamics of the political economies in which they lived. People themselves relied on a range of structures and practices. It is essential to understand that practices of land claims depended on “prior structural configurations” (Kelly 1968:35), but which structures? The great variability shown in comparative studies of Highland societies were not examples of either/or. Rather, such inherent variability provided a framework within which change occurred (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999). What occurred was a shift in practice, not in underlying ideas or ideology because

variability was inherent in the social and cultural framework and which elements were expressed varied with shifting contexts. The question is not just the validity of our rubrics, but what people themselves do and how they justify it.

Emergent Patrilineality and Resource Scarcity among the Lisu of Revealed River

Both patrilineal and allegiance ideology and practice existed among Lisu, but the degree to which each prevailed varied with political and economic conditions. Lisu people of Thirty Thousand worked within a framework of patrilineality, but there were other variables of greater or lesser importance and congruency with patrilineality as well. How they practiced patrilineality depended on what was possible and what was feasible. The contradiction between individual and household reputes could be in conflict or irrelevant to patrilineality, as it was in the opium economy, but in the post-poppy economy, patrilineality became the means by which to achieve reputes, especially through the viability of future households of one's children. The inherent variability and contradictions of prior structures is essential to understanding the nature of Lisu adaptation, which occurs on the level of individuals' strategizing within their cultural framework.

It is useful to delineate some of the traits by which various scholars have sought to define unilineality and its axes of variation, and compare these criteria to Lisu social organization in the opium and post-poppy economies.

Table 5.2. Comparison of Lisu Patrilineages in the Opium and Post-Poppy Economies		
Lineage Model, variable factors	Lisu — Opium Economy	Lisu — Post-Poppy Economy
Evans-Pritchard and Fortes (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1940)		
Segmentary lineages	No; multiple lines of cleavage, not all kinship based.	No, but this would be long cycle, so no evidence either way, possibly for northern Lisu?

Table 5.2. Comparison of Lisu Patrilineages in the Opium and Post-Poppy Economies		
Lineage Model, variable factors	Lisu — Opium Economy	Lisu — Post-Poppy Economy
Permanent, enduring lineal attachment to land	Not in daily practice, but in ideology, household level ritual (and some village ritual).	Increasingly longer cycles with transmission of property and sedentization makes this possible.
Heredity Descent (transmission of property, rank office (Also in Kuper))	No inheritance of rank status, office; some transmission of wealth across generations through bridewealth; some inheritance of minimal property, all portable. (Black Lisu, no material support for rank status except through trade and relations with state)	Inheritance of land, capital or investments; increased transmission of wealth through bridewealth. Transmission from F to Ss.
Political functions Kinship as primitive polity, Minimal political centralization (also in Kuper)	No – allegiance groups significant politically organized cliques, but these worked against encompassing political organization. Leaders are like “big men,” but with only limited local power. (Black Lisu, leaders with material or political support could demonstrate power.)	Yes, in the context of state interventions. Political centralization due to state penetration; state potentially favors patrilineal/agnatic relations by negotiating with powerful heads of allegiance groups, who are now heads of patriline.
Kuper (Kuper 1982)		
Corporate – kinship and territory	Lineages and clans are not land holding groups.	Incipient territoriality (decreased migration, state demarcation and allocation of land), but still based on <u>localized</u> patrilineage.
Exogamous	Yes, but negotiable dispensations common.	Yes, still negotiable in theory, but post-marital residence (the main means of negotiation) is not.
Unilineal	Ideologically, yes; in practice, as likely to use other types of kinship (matrilateral, affinal) and non-kinship relations to establish allegiance groups.	Ideologically, yes; functionally, more so than in the past, along with decreasing functionality of allegiance groups.

Table 5.2. Comparison of Lisu Patrilineages in the Opium and Post-Poppy Economies		
Lineage Model, variable factors	Lisu — Opium Economy	Lisu — Post-Poppy Economy
Status distinctions within the group depend on descent Difference in status between agnates and non-agnates (also in Barnes)	Ideologically, yes, but not in practice. Dessaint says there are distinctions, but his examples do not clearly show this. Personal traits (hard working, assertiveness, luck) could make an affine the leader of a group.	Increasingly so; non-agnates are at a disadvantage in land access and political relations.
Patrilineal ancestors as guardians of the agnatic principle (also in Barnes)	Yes, on household level (taboos), marriage, and village “morality,” but not in terms of maintaining unilineality in practice.	Yes.
Genealogical depth, a founder (also in Barnes)	Varying from 3-6 generations deep, related to dispersal through migration; clan histories are lists of places traveled through rather than of named ancestors. No founder.	Incipient, <i>maw mong</i> is of “founding” lineage – headmanship, too? Note diarchic structure
Barnes (Barnes 1962)		
Bounded v. unbounded affiliation	Unbounded.	Bounded.
Virilocality (patrification)	Not dominant practice, but ideologically significant.	Yes, conscious choice regarding land access.
Agnatic density (cumulative patrification)	Low, but variable from village to village.	Increasing patrification resulting in increased agnatic density, especially for the two dominant lineages in Revealed River.
Counter-agnatic filiation requires special dispensation from agnatic dogma	Yes, but very common through payment of bride price, fines	Yes, but not as possible in practice now as non-agnates are not welcomed.
Descent as morally evaluated and sanctioned	Yes.	Yes.
Descent as a mechanism of recruitment and ascribed relationships	No; descent was one of many elements of recruitment to groups, ideologically significant but not functionally so, depending on village.	Yes, identity and social relationship as patrilineage member is ascribed and is now main means of recruitment.

Table 5.2. Comparison of Lisu Patrilineages in the Opium and Post-Poppy Economies		
Lineage Model, variable factors	Lisu — Opium Economy	Lisu — Post-Poppy Economy
Multiplicity of cleavages or potential cleavages	Yes, the hallmark of Lisu social structure was the multiplicity of cleavages.	Fewer options for fission through dispersal; multiple cleavages subsumed in household and lineage.
Degree of optation	High optation, high level of affiliation with non-members of patrilineage.	Main mechanisms for optation being eliminated; low possibility of non-patrilineal affiliation.
Plurality of membership	Yes.	Decreasing.
Group solidarity v. network cohesion	Network cohesion.	Group solidarity.
Membership (lineage) v. residence (unbounded affiliation)	Residence.	Membership, but arising out of land constraints and patrilocality.
Single home (lineage) or multiple homes (unbounded affiliation)	Frequent moves over the course of a life time, with possible concurrent changes in allegiance group membership.	Single – few alternatives given decreased possibilities for migration.
Automatic operation of rules and group level ties in exchange (lineage) v. individual initiative (bounded filiation)	Individual initiative, especially in leadership and alliance with leader. Patrilineal identification was generally ascribed but overridden by alliances created by individual household.	Possibilities for individual initiative in group formation decreased. Automatic application of rules regarding lineage identification and few opportunities for changing it. No group ties in exchange (yet?).
Lineage elders and seniority (lineage) v. big men (unbounded affiliation)	Leadership by individuals with repute, power, potency.	Lineage elders and seniority more politically and economically important.
Group solidarity (lineage) v. multiple affiliation, flexibility and maneuverability (unbounded affiliation)	Multiple affiliation; flexibility and maneuverability the hallmark of Lisu social structure	Group solidarity increased as multiple affiliation less likely.
Concentrated marriages (enduring connubial alliances among lineages) (lineage) v. marriage dispersed (unbounded)	Dispersed.	Dispersed; terms of choosing spouse in transition, but not necessarily toward concentrated form as little evidence yet of enduring alliances across generations.

Table 5.2. Comparison of Lisu Patrilineages in the Opium and Post-Poppy Economies		
Lineage Model, variable factors	Lisu — Opium Economy	Lisu — Post-Poppy Economy
Need to limit people with access to scarce resources (unilineality) v. need for increased strength with members (warfare) (unbounded affiliation)	Unbounded affiliation: Increased strength in numbers of people in local residence desirable due to need to attract labor and for protection against bandits.	Unilineality: Need to restrict access to scarce land resources; warfare definitely not an issue.
Inheritance (and BW) important (lineage) v. relatively low level of inheritance (unbounded affiliation)	Inheritance insignificant. BW important, but boys had options for independence.	Inheritance importance increasing. BW dependency of juniors on seniors increasing.
High dependence on agnatic kin for economic support (lineage) v. possible to use others' resources (low dependence) (unbounded)	Low dependence on agnates for economic support, high level of use of "others" resources; but due to open land access, rights to land defined by labor upon it.	Higher dependence on economic support of agnates, especially for land and capital investment, bridewealth.
Contextual shifts of opposition and alliance	Not evident.	Not evident, except vis-a-vis the state.
Chronic segmentation v. catastrophic	No evidence; alliances shift on the basis of multiple cleavages or potential cleavages based on village conflict or better economic opportunity.	No evidence of chronic segmentation, but this would take more than one generation.
Strathern (Strathern 1968)		
Stress on unity of the clan group	Yes, in ideology.	Yes, in ideology.
Alliance/marriage among groups as key form of political alliance	No, although Durrenberger posits rudiments of a moiety organization.	Attempts made in Revealed River failed.
Frechione and Scaglione (Frechione and Scaglione 1981)		
Formal kin group authority, coercive power involving kin group members	Very little.	Increasing coercive power due to parental control of bridewealth and access to land

Table 5.2. Comparison of Lisu Patrilineages in the Opium and Post-Poppy Economies		
Lineage Model, variable factors	Lisu — Opium Economy	Lisu — Post-Poppy Economy
Usufruct rights in kin group agricultural land limited to group members	No.	Currently negotiated by Lisu household as dynamics of marriage, post-marital residence and household relations shift.
Inheritance of land	No.	Increasing among Lisu, although strictly speaking what was inherited was the rights to cultivate land, as the state controls land.
Sedentary settlement pattern	No.	Yes, again, due to state restrictions.
Rivière (Rivière 1993)		
Length of cycles: 1 generational (transference of bone/semen and blood/flesh) v. 2 generation or longer cycle involving transmission of name, ritual	One generational cycle, developmental cycle of household is key element.	Now longer cycles as well – due to transmission of land, permanent settlements; and incorporated more intimately into state and historical time.
Functional v. ideological	Ideological, not functional.	Ideological and increasingly functional.
Burton (Burton 1997) (three of the following five traits)		
Members consistently and accurately identify members of their own and other groups	Yes.	Yes.
Members recognize responsibilities to other members.	Minimal, occurring more within context of household or allegiance group. (Obligations recognized but not activated.)	Yes, although primarily to members of localized patrilineage, within village.
Discernible organizational or management functions at group level.	No.	Emergent, especially vis-à-vis outsiders (Thai officials).
Rights or properties can be held by group.	No.	Yes, but only localized patrilineage.
Relations between different groups are 'political' in nature.	No – politics not handled by localized patrilineage but by allegiance group.	Increasingly true, especially in context of Project assumptions.

Table 5.2 demonstrates the ways in which Lisu social structure in the post-poppy economy had shifted toward more features of lineage than found among Lisu of the opium economy in regard to descent group ideology and affiliation. In post-poppy northern Thailand, patrilineages were more important in daily practice and strategy than allegiance groups. This came through patrilocal post-marital residence, patrification, and resultant increased agnatic density. If we had not seen patrilineages previously, this would have been a great surprise. All Lisu did not exhibit this shift toward patrilineality due to variation in the economic and political conditions under which Lisu villages existed. Dr. Uraivan Tan-Kim-Yong, working with Lisu, Hmong, and Karen villages in highland development projects throughout the north, noted the strength of Lisu patrilineages, but noted that agnatic density and activation of patrilineages in daily life was hindered by dispersal across the landscape of northern Thailand. In contrast, in See the Tiger, social structures, including patrilineages, were disintegrating. In the opium economy, descent had been salient in intra-household social relationships and rituals significant only to a limited extent in extra-household relationships, in large part because patrilineal relatives might not be present and neighbors were as likely to be affinal, matrilineal, or friendship (alliance based)⁸³ as patrilineal. One way to look at this is to say that the key point is the extent to which patrilineages have become functional lineages (Rivière 1993). They became functional through the increased practice of patrilocality, which increased agnatic density and thus made patrilineages of greater social, economic, and political importance in everyday life as people's strategies became increasingly congruent with their principles of descent. The ideology of lineages was significant in practice because descent ideology, reproduced through ancestral ritual, provided the cultural repertoire on which people drew as conditions shifted. Patrilineage was the prior structure. That is, Lisu social structure was marked more by cumulative patrification

⁸³ I recognize the confusion inherent in this terminology, given that so much of the kinship literature uses alliance to refer to marriage exchanges and the relationships established by those. However, Lisu allied with each other on the basis of economic opportunity and political support in village disputes. They were allies.

(Barnes 1962) than deep descent; unsurprisingly for people who had migrated so far and fast, genealogies were still shallow (3-7 generations).

What is interesting and changeable about Lisu society was the degree and extent of patrification, leading to agnatic density. Which principles people used to affiliate themselves with a group of people in Lisu society varied depending on the features of the political economy and ecology. In the opium economy, multiple cleavages and possible affiliations provided the means by which population was distributed across the landscape depending on the economic and ecological conditions people they encountered. They strategized on the basis of needs for labor and possibilities for repute, which had specific consequences for the “strength of patrilineality” but did not make Lisu more or less patrilineal in ideology, ritual, and intra-household relations. Patrilineality existed in the opium economy, but mainly in household relations, ancestor rituals, and ideal relations. Among Lisu in northern Thailand, there were certain elements of a shared being marked by lineage membership in that a typical personality was attributed to members of particular lineages (“peacemakers,” “hot-tempered”) and villages were assumed to function more smoothly if the characteristics of the lineages in it were complementary. This fits Strathern’s criterion that patrilineages stressed the unity of the clan group, symbolized by shared paternal substance or common descent from an ancestor (Strathern 1968). But by and large, rather than common participation in shared paternal substance, patrilineage membership was marked by ritual on the household level; households gained blessing from the ancestors and shamanistic rituals brought together the members of the localized patrilineage. Lineage connections were also important in communications networks that facilitated migration decisions. When traveling, Lisu looked for fellow lineage members with whom to stay in order to avoid running afoul of someone else’s ancestors. Exogamy was also an important function of Lisu patrilineages, remembering that in cases where marriages did not adhere to lineage exogamy the bride or groom could negotiate a change in her or his patrilineage identity, paying a fine, and practicing appropriate ritual to avoid illness inflicted by the ancestors or other spirits when the ancestors withdrew their

protection. However, both patrification and the variety of other ways in which people were recruited to a patrilineage or allegiance group were features of Lisu society. Strathern refers to such practices as equivocal for defining the degree of patrilineality of a society; this “split between dogmas relating to group unity and attitudes to recruitment” made it impossible to assess the strength of patrilineality in the case described by Meggitt (Strathern 1968:50). But the split seems to me to be a red herring. Lineage features were not completely absent among Lisu in the opium economy and the ideology of lineage was prominent. Patrilineal practices were validated by reference to their ideology of patrilineality and already existing patrilineal ritual practices in that patrilocality of sons was the ideal form of post-marital residence even in the opium economy, whether actuated or not. In this, Rivière’s distinction between ideological and functional lineality is appropriate to understanding Lisu practice. He cites Crocker on the Bororo as an example of a society that was not ideologically matrilineal, but was functionally matrilineal (Rivière 1993). In the Lisu case, patrilineal ancestors were “guardians of the agnatic principle,” expressed through ancestor ritual in the household, and while individuals had occasional flexibility in affiliation it often had to be validated by dispensation from agnatic dogma, for instance, by changing one’s patrilineage.

A key difference between Lisu patrilineages and the African and Highlands PNG patrilineages discussed in the literature is that Lisu patrilineages were not landholding units; even recent landholding is on a household basis (and, strictly speaking, all that is owned is use rights as the state owns the land). Another key distinction was that tribal warfare did not occur, although clan feuds had been common in the north among Black Lisu in the past. The lack of warfare might account for the lack of stress on unity of the clan group that seemed so important in Highlands PNG societies (Strathern 1968).⁸⁴ As such, lineages were not a form of polity, as

⁸⁴ Note the interesting difference in levels of comparison. For the Highlands, the comparison is inherently whether lineages or alternative kinship and alliance structures were significant in resource allocation; in Africa, the contrast has been between lineage society and small-scale states. One was an ecological argument and the other a political one.

assumed by in British structural-functionalism (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1940). Southeast Asia has rarely attracted this sort of notice of unilineality because of the pronounced non-unilineal structure of kinship and the low population density. It is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the existence of lineages as an either/or situation. Lisu can be seen as an example of both cognatic and unilineal practice in different contexts. Like autonomy and hierarchy in Lisu households, both existed in relation to each other, and which was more apparent reflected the political (and economic) environment in which Lisu lived their culture. These contradictions within society may reflect their history, that is, of fluctuating models of alignment with states and against states – the diarchic⁸⁵ model of village organization was an expression of the same sort of contradiction and Lisu cosmology similarly demonstrated ways in which Lisu both assimilated and encapsulated their relationships with powerful external polities and peoples (Durrenberger 1989).

Looked at from the African perspective of contrasting lineages and small scale states, that is, lineages as a primitive polity, other interesting contrasts between Lisu lineages and the lineage model appear. In descent-based systems, domestic groups were attached to the land and ownership was claimed through “ancestral traces,” particularly graves. In contrast, small scale states were marked by locality (territory)-based systems where membership was based on residence (Shipton 1984:616). Lisu in the opium economy exhibited the residential mobility typical of locality-based systems and small states: membership in the community was determined by place of residence; there was no probationary period for newcomers; full cultivation rights were granted to all community residents by a headman; and fields were laid out in patches, their placement bearing little or no correspondence with the genealogical relationship of land holders. Lisu land was “owned” by a range of spirits (including Thai, Shan, animist spirits and others) and only village land was ritually held by a Lisu spirit, the Old Grandfather Spirit (Durrenberger 1989; Hutheesing 1990b:9); cultivation rights were gained on the basis of prestations to the Old Grandfather Spirit, and while this was mediated by the servitor, who was usually a senior male of

⁸⁵ See footnote 36, Chapter 3.

the original Lisu patrilineage in the village, his role in day-to-day life was mainly as a guardian of morals. Therefore, the Lisu land use system, especially under the opium economy, resembles these locality-based systems far more than descent-based ones.

The locale-based social structure of Lisu, however, was not because they were incorporated into local states. On the contrary, Northern Thailand was an empty land, uncontrolled territory, in the period in which Lisu migrated there, and local states had little interest in uplanders (Jonsson 1996a; Jonsson 1996b; Tagliacozzo 2001; Hanks and Hanks 2001; Maule 2002). Rather, locale-based systems reflected migration histories and the open access to land at that time. Flexibility was supported by opium and the long-term history of Lisu relations with states. But state structures, no matter how locally attenuated, were significant in this particular social structure. The Lisu long-term history of relations to states created practices oriented toward the maintenance of autonomy in the face of the domination of empires; forced labor and conscription into armies; alienation of land and involuntary resettlement; taxation and punitive raids (discussed in Chapter 2). Furthermore, the role of opium in Lisu social structure is the result of the particular histories of England, India, and especially China. Finally, the conditions Lisu face today are the direct result of their incorporation into the nation-state of Thailand. Scarcity of land is due in large part to the Thai state's enclosure of vast swathes of mountain land in order to fulfill its own economic goals. Preserving watershed forests not only plays well on the international stage of the fraternity of nations, but ensures sufficient water for hydroelectricity for industrialization and farming to grow sufficient rice for export, in short, for economic modernization in the global context. Global processes live in Revealed River, but in unique ways, mediated by the Thai nation-state and framed within local social processes (*cf.* Jackson 2003a; Jackson 2003b).

Mechanisms

One of the problems with Meggitt's hypothesis was the lack of an underlying mechanism by which a kinship structure became key in allocation of resources. Frechione and Scaglione's

revival of the hypothesis of a relationship between unilineality and land scarcity showed only correlations, although strong. Such models assume that discrete kin groups “evolved” in response to Boserupian intensification and kinship was the best way to control the labor needed for intensification. They defer to Meggitt in assuming that increased kin group discreteness would resolve conflict over land (Meggitt 1965:273), although they mention that in fact the immediate cause of increase in kin group discreteness might be kin solidarity in the face of warfare as a result of increased population density. Situations without warfare, then, become far more difficult to explain, although Firth explicitly stated that unilineality reduced conflict over land, and there was no warfare in Tikopia at that time (Firth 1959). What other mechanisms exist by which unilineality increases with land scarcity? The problem is better understood by addressing it in a culturally and historically specific way and by moving beyond a general, outside-the-system functionalism. Examining the choices made by individual actors in the context of their assessments of land resources, productivity, and the risks and benefits of incorporation of cognatic or affinal kin allows us to understand the mechanisms by which such social transformations occurred. Processually-oriented work looking at the same group historically or longitudinally allows us to understand the mechanisms as they shift within the existing structure. Social structures must be understood in the context of the full range of elements of that social structure, alliance, affiliation, siblingship, descent, that is, the relationships of social relationships (Kelly 1977, 1985). Among those mechanisms mentioned in more recent work from Papua New Guinea are that the degree of filiation or affiliation occurred depending on its perceived benefits – the need to open new land, to occupy borders of territory adjacent to enemies, provide numbers in times of warfare, or connections and reciprocity when periodic frosts occurred people became refugees; or to restrict access when carrying capacity has been reached (Wohl 2004). In other cases, the definitions of appropriate generosity to resident guests shifted with shifting contexts. Resident “guests” became aware that they needed to practice restraint in requests for aid and land when resources were scarce. This was mediated on the hosts’ part by their recognition that while their immediate

interests made generosity unviable, expectations of future needs meant that they needed to practice motivated generosity to maintain alliances that they might need in the future (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999).

However, Firth's work on Tikopia provides the best analogy to conditions I observed in Revealed River. Here, island conditions strictly delimited land, much as the Project's application of national watershed land policy had, and the only options open to households were either emigration, which was limited, or to constrain access to land using social structural mechanisms already in place, that is, ideals of patrilineal inheritance and privileged access to land for those who were patrilineally related within the same household (brothers who were sons of the same father). Previously in Tikopia, there had been considerable freedom of usufruct as long as title was uncontested. Those using land had to acknowledge the owner's rights through presentation of first fruits. Land was also granted to a married daughter or sister, perhaps as a dowry, and her children's rights to continue to farm this land were sometimes recognized. With increase in population, a result of the breakdown of the practice of restricting marriage and fatherhood to only the eldest brother, owners' attitudes hardened and there was a sharper definition of land interests. The rights of married women to cultivate her natal clan's land were severely curtailed; personal rights of household members in land as against the rights of members of other lineages was more sharply delineated; usufruct was rarely granted both because the owners wanted to use the land and because they feared contestation of their title; and cropping patterns changed as people planted crops such as manioc that did not require fallow land in order to mark usufruct or title. At the same time, brothers subdivided their land not at the death of the father as in the past but on the marriage of the son (Firth 1959:158-179). In short, "Tikopia unilaterality as been reinforced by [land] pressure" (Firth 1959:180).

Among the Lisu in Northern Thailand, delineation of patrilineal rights emerged out of the aggregate of individual household decisions to conserve their household land resources for the next generation of their patrilineage – their sons and their sons' households. The rights of married

women to cultivate land in her natal place, land opened in labor with her father and brothers and therefore belonging to the localized patrilineage, were curtailed by the enforcement of patrilocal post-marital residence to the extent that the practice of bride service had nearly ceased. This closed the door on a main mechanism of recruitment into the allegiance group, which was also the means by which boys with no resources had effectuated marriage. In the past, affines, matrilineal kin, and allies had been welcomed, but in modern Revealed River the rights of patrilineal household members in land were more sharply drawn and enforced. In the past, aside from open access to land, Lisu who had gained usufruct by clearing land could grant that usufruct to others if asked (and presented with payment that included a bottle of liquor). Households migrating to the village also requested recognition by the Old Grandfather Spirit and no one was denied (although others might have left if they did not want to live with the newcomers). But in Revealed River, fallow land was at risk of being marked as abandoned and vacant, allowing state appropriation. Households maintained tight control over the land by using it. In these conditions, usufruct was rarely granted outside of the patrilineage because the owners wanted to use the land in the future and maintain the informal title granted them by the Project by their use of it. Here, a difference between Tikopia and northern Thailand was that state land policy in Thailand has been the impetus to decreased carrying capacity, while in Tikopia, the delimitation of land was a pre-existing natural condition but contact with the west (especially missionization) had result in changes in marriage practices that resulted in an increase in population. However, in both cases, global forces resulted not in a breakdown of kinship structures, as assumed in popular depictions of the effects of globalization, but an elaboration and sharper delineation of kinship, legitimate kinship ties for access to land, decrease in recognition of collateral relationships in accessing land and an increase in the importance of unilineal relationships.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ While this could, through one lens, be seen as a transition from tribal to peasant society, in fact Lisu had been a type of peasant for generations, or at least on the cusp of tribe and peasant, as they had been producing a cash crop for global markets. It is, perhaps, debatable whether the distinction between tribe and peasant is legitimate in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia.

The Dominance of Patrilineages in Revealed River

Patrilineality in Revealed River did reflect political processes, and this reinforced the emergent patrilineality. Land tenure was deeply political in the context of the Project; “rich farmers” hid their holdings from the Project and from other, land poor families who might in the past have been affiliated with them in allegiance groups. In the conditions of the 1990s in Revealed River, the land “rich” did not perceive themselves as rich because they were hoarding for their children’s future. This changed the nature of political relationships; the leading lineages could not afford to be generous to affines and allies, to display reputé by attracting a large group of followers. The land tenure system was viable or not given future expectations (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999), and the expectations of Lisu in Revealed River were not optimistic. Strategies to accumulate and validate land by these lineages entailed favoring agnatic kin over other types of kin or allies.

One reason for the dominance of two patrilineages in Revealed River may be historical accident. Revealed River was a medium-sized village with two main Lisu allegiance groups. In Revealed River, the lineages of the two main allegiance group leaders (one of whom was still alive), were relatively land wealthy because of the maturity of their households in the developmental cycle at the point in history when the Project began to limit land use. Households that had tenuous connections or were unaffiliated with one of the major patrilineages (whose elders had once been the center of allegiance groups) were under a great deal of economic pressure. This was in part because many of these poorer households were at a stage in the household developmental cycle in which they had many consumers and relatively few producers. As newer households, they had also had little land when land limitations were put into place. Getting permission to open new fields required political support in order to negotiate with Project personnel. But they got little support from allies through their non-agnatic connections with households of the main factions/patrilineages, no longer shared common interests with their former allegiance groups, and so left in search of kin with whom they could share labor in places

where land was available. The poor who complained of the lack of land were constructed as non-compliant in Project discourse (greedy, not willing to sacrifice for the good of the nation) and Project personnel pressured faction leaders to bring them into line. One way to bring them into line was by, in effect, cutting them out. Problematic households were forced out, thereby transferring land use problems to areas outside the Project area. Most of the households that left Revealed River immediately before my arrival or during my stay were affinal or matrilineal kin to the two main patrilineal groups. For the dominant lineages, the discourse of patrilineality was a “representational kinship” (Hviding 1993:803) that strengthened their position vis-a-vis the Project by making local forms of authority more legible to the state, but also strengthened patrilineal ties in the context of state control of agriculture and land resources.

In this political environment, there was a clear sense that certain villagers did not have the same rights to land as the bigger, founding lineages. Given the profound egalitarianism espoused by Lisu, how did this come about? In the opium economy, new immigrants had had to ask permission to settle if the village was already established. They paid a fee to the *maw mong* and made a presentation through him to the Village Guardian (Old Grandfather) Spirit; and made prestations to the headman. This was depicted by Durrenberger as pro forma and no one was denied the right to settle (Durrenberger 1989). To this day, the New Year dancing that blesses each household for the coming year starts one night at the home of the *maw mong* and the next night at the house of the headman, before circling around the entire village in clockwise or counter-clockwise direction. For a young woman to not dance at these houses is considered insulting to the household where she does not dance. By its nature, these rituals acknowledged some degree of ownership rights or at least prior and superior rights of founding lineages and reminded the rest that they were newcomers. Tensions about this were present in Revealed River in regard to both land and political power vis-a-vis the Thai state.

The smaller number of dominant lineages in the village allowed greater agnatic density, which also allowed them to establish a social and political dominance in the village, in part through

strategic relationships with Project personnel, making the senior leader of each lineage more like a patron than a big man who had attracted people to his allegiance group by his repute. In this way, they were able to maintain dominance of land resources. As in other ethnographic cases, groups that were more homogeneous in kinship composition had an advantage in positioning themselves to justify their claims to land. Agnatic influence in access to land was a consequence of both land scarcity and the historical conditions that created that scarcity (Fay 2003:7, 25) That is, history determined the actual conditions, but agnates were able to, and apparently chose to, restrict access of non-agnates to “their” land. This was in contrast to See the Tiger, where there were seven patrilineages, scattered about the village rather than living in recognized neighborhoods within the village (Hutheesing 1990a:84). The diversity and size of a village such as See the Tiger did not allow this sort of coordination – but neither did they have the advantage of working with one major institution instead of a plethora of small-scale capitalists looking to exploit their land and labor.

In the end, the political economy of the environment was a key element in the particular forms that Lisu society took, and in this as well the Lisu case differs from that studied by Meggitt. The great degree of inter-household autonomy had been replaced by a set of structures that already existed within Lisu social structure. As the political economy changed, Lisu drew on different possibilities within their existing social structure to adapt. In this case, the re-emergence patrilineality in marriage practices permitted households, the core unit of Lisu society, to adapt, and as a result a different set of inter-household relationships, the allegiance group, went into a decline. Neither set of relationships disappeared, but simply came to the fore as conditions changed.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

This dissertation is a study of how transformations in Lisu social structure were patterned by both historical conditions and global political and economic forces. It is a study of how globalization is enacted on the ground through the filters of national and international policies and economies. But it is striking that the profound changes in the conditions in which Lisu lived had not brought about wholesale transformation of their social structure; rather, there were patterned consistencies between the opium and the post-opium societies. This arose out of the heterogeneity of key features of their society that allowed flexibility in their responses to changes brought about by the execution of anti-opium and anti-swiddening policy in northern Thailand. The contradictions between principles of hierarchy and autonomy, descent and residential household, for instance, expanded their repertoire for dealing with conditions of change while still within their own cultural framework.

The Economy of Opium Swiddening

When introduced in the early nineteenth century as a cash crop, opium became a central part of Lisu adaptation to their environmental and economic conditions (*cf.* Chapter 2). The places Lisu lived were marginal lands for agriculture; furthermore, western Yunnan was a place prone to warfare and natural disasters; populations shifted across the landscape in response to earthquakes, fires, landslides, warfare, and forced relocation. Trade was an integral part of the adaptation of these populations, in large part due to these political and environmental conditions. At the point at which opium became a significant cash crop, a number of political processes had made trade difficult. Trade networks had been disrupted by the Panthay (Muslim) Rebellions,

which decimated the population of Hui or Muslim Chinese who had dominated much of the trade. In addition, the inroad of colonial trade had shifted trade to ports, dislocating regional overland trade networks at the same time that the Han and Tibetan administrations were weakened, giving rise to banditry, warfare, and rebellions. Into this gap came opium, a plant well-suited to the ecological conditions of upland Northern Mainland Southeast Asia and a commodity with an ever-expanding market. Opium was easy to grow, easy to transport, easy to store, and easy to sell. Opium allowed a population such as the Lisu to live in marginal environments that they might not otherwise have been able to survive in by transferring resources from wealthier regions that bought opium to the people of these marginal regions.

Opium provided the Lisu with the means to adapt to the political economic conditions of the nineteenth and twentieth century in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia. Specifically, opium facilitated the movement southwards of the population of Lisu and other uplanders. Factors in the push of Lisu and other upland non-Han groups was related to the demographic transition of Yunnan by a massive influx of Han, and because of the violence and political instability of conditions in Yunnan with the extension and then weakening of Chinese government administration. Opium gave Lisu a quick, storable, transportable form of wealth that could be converted into cash or used for display. Their migration south was also supported by access to open lands in northern Burma and northern Thailand. Shortly after opium became significant in upland economies, the southern Lisu population began to rapidly migrate southward into the relatively peaceful lands of northern Burma and northern Thailand where they could practice pioneering swiddening, had access to trade networks to sell opium and other crops, but where they had to deal with very little government administration. There, they took advantage of and created their own in-between space, a non-state space, that became essential to their self-identification.

Opium had become the nexus of adaptation and survival in Lisu society in Thailand and also the medium by which Lisu participated in the global economy; this global trade also

supported their autonomy. Ironically, the marginality permitted by and even inherent to opium and swiddening became defined as a problem as Thailand turned itself into a modern nation-state. The illegality of opium brought the Lisu into the gaze of international drug control programs; environmental concerns turned that gaze 'green.' Opium and trees became the main problematizations by which the Lisu were incorporated into the Thai state. By the 1990s, opium interdiction had been successful and watershed conservation had allowed the state to take over most of the uplands of northern Thailand as forest reserves, which resulted in the potential alienation of upland minority farming peoples from the land.

Opium interdiction and watershed conservation transformed the Lisu economy. It ended open access to land and migration as well as cultivation of the mainstay of their economic system. This brought about striking changes in the Lisu agricultural economy. Opium had been the key element in household resource and labor allocation. The new economy created a transformed set of constraints and opportunities for Lisu households. Transformations in the agricultural economy in Thirty Thousand led to the diversification of agricultural activities, both spatially and temporally. At the same time that their most productive and marketable crop was interdicted, the enclosure of mountain lands created severe land constraints for most Lisu. They were not able to migrate or open new lands and had to shorten fallow of mountain lands, resulting in loss of fertility. Knowledge of the consequences of land limitation and concern for the future led many Lisu farmers to seek out a variety of parcels of land across northern Thailand and even into Burma in order to diversify the types of plots they had access to and thus crops they could grow. Diversification of land holdings would, they hoped, reduce the risks of complete loss of farm land if the state took possession of any of their land. The range of agricultural activities required closer control of a pool of labor and specialization within that pool – *e.g.*, truck driver, store keeper, middleman. Labor had to be available to send to distant fields throughout the agricultural season; cropping patterns had become more complex; agriculture was more dependent on farmers' knowledge of markets in order to know what to plant and when, as well as how and where to sell

crops. All of this had consequences for the allocation of labor and for social relationships among households, both along the vectors of labor exchange and access to land. Diversification of land holdings also expanded the range of their access to different types of markets as they could develop relationships within different local marketing networks. Lisu families also sent their children to lowland boarding schools to prepare them for the future.

Social Transformations with and without Opium

Opium had been central in the formation of the social structure of Lisu in northern Thailand. It had financed and facilitated a particular social forms; its interdiction undercut the basis of this historically specific Lisu society. When it became a significant cash crop in the early nineteenth century, it fulfilled a number of needs in Lisu society at that time. Opium funded marriage and migration; opium and open lands made independence and egalitarianism possible. Individual households could be autonomous. There was little need or opportunity for dependence on lineage elders or patrons because everyone had access to the means of production (making a living) and reproduction (opium wealth and open lands made it possible for young men to finance a large part of their own marriage). Conflict was as often as not resolved by the injured party moving away; intra-household tensions between adults could soon be resolved by splitting the household. The dispersal of population across the landscape militated against the formation of enduring villages. Rather, we find the atomization of patrilineages and fission of villages within a few years of their founding. That is, there was no attachment to place, to graves, or to an 'ancestral' territory when people moved so often. This form of Lisu society was based on autonomous households that joined together on a contractual basis for joint enterprises, even for village-level ritual. These traits became the hallmarks of Lisu society in northern Thailand at the height of the opium economy.

Adaptation to the post-poppy economy brought about specific adaptations at the household level. Households experiencing resource constraints relieved the burdens on the household of non-producing consumers by sending young children to lowland boarding schools.

Additionally, formal Thai education prepared children for different economic strategies in the future and made it possible for them to deal with officials of the Thai state, a task that school children and young adults frequently took on for their parents and grandparents. Increasing their level of education was also oriented toward gaining legitimacy in Lisu relations with Thai, who tended to look down on Lisu as uneducated barbarians. This strategy looked to a continuing constrained future, enveloped by the Thai state, regardless of adults' constant hope of a return to the days of household economic and social autonomy.

There were specific results for household labor allocation. The post-opium agricultural economy required increased capital input into farming and diversification of crops and economic strategies. This promoted increased authority by the male head of household as a manager of the diverse strategies required in the new economy. Land resources influenced what could be produced and how much; capital resources influenced which farm enterprises could be realized and how well other production factors used; but management capability determined how well land, labor, and capital were utilized. Management capability included decision-making on site selection of fields; selection of crops to be grown in each field; determination of field size manageable by the labor pool available to the household; timing of farming activities; and marketing. Management capability was apparent when some farmers tested and adopted a new profitable crop or cropping technology more quickly than other farmers; or reacted more skillfully than others to changes in farming conditions; or invented their own, more efficient, farming techniques. Under these conditions, the managerial skills of the leader of the labor unit was the greatest determinant of agricultural success of a household. "In broad terms, one could say that more capable farmers allocate their available resources (land, labour, capital) more efficiently than others" (Salzer 1993:40). In Revealed River, land constraints made a farmer's skill in determining how to fallow or what crops to plant in rotation to preserve fertility and his management of labor that had to be sent to distant fields were even more significant in that farmer's success.

Under these conditions, the patriarchal authority of the Lisu father was congruent with management requirements of the new agricultural system. He had the moral authority, rooted in the ideology of patrilineality and enacted in household ancestral and social ritual, to assign tasks to his sons, their wives, and his unmarried daughters, and could reasonably expect them to be carried out. In her study of two groups in Kenya, Heald (1991) found that extended patrilocal households allowed more flexibility in labor organization. There was a low degree of autonomy in daily household routine. The collective interests of those involved in cooperative agricultural enterprise balanced out the intersecting and potentially divisive interests. In contrast, small, autonomous households had more difficulty controlling sufficient labor and were poorer. Similarly, in Belize, Wilk found that household clusters working together had an advantage in cash crop production as they could accumulate and concentrate capital more effectively for agricultural investment. However, the scheduling advantages were most significant, as many tasks in diversified cash crop production required fine scheduling due in part to the distance of fields that might require work all at the same time. Again, the common interests involved overcame cultural tendencies toward more autonomous household groups in conditions of higher human/land ratios (Wilk 1984). In the case of Lisu of Revealed River, the increase of agnatic density created advantages in the face of household autonomy, while the ethos of patrilineally-based household hierarchy (F to Ss, oB to yB) allowed more decisive management of land, labor, and capital for the advantage of the localized patrilineage group. The authority of the father was further reinforced by his control of an increasingly scarce essential resource – land for cultivation and wealth for to pay brideprice (*cf.* Chapters 3 and 4).

As the political and agricultural economies of Thirty Thousand changed, so too did practice in regard to marriage and allegiance groups, that is, in relationships between households. The key mechanism for change in marriage and allegiance groups was post-marital residence, a point at which strategizing had once been possible in order to increase productivity, wealth, and household repute. In the post-opium economy, households conserved available capital to invest

in land, trucks, new seeds, and other inputs to the fields. Labor was not the source of wealth anymore; labor in and of itself was not perceived to be as valuable as it once had been. In these conditions, early marriage had little benefit and considerable costs. In strategizing to bring about marriage ceremonies with reputes by paying bridewealth at least equal to what was paid in the past, marriage of sons was delayed in hopes of accumulating more wealth for bridewealth in a good agricultural year. The aggregate effect of parents not letting their sons marry was a delay of marriage for girls as well. In the past, labor could be recruited through the practice of brideservice. By keeping the young couple with the bride's parents for up to six years after their marriage, a great deal of extra labor was secured. But this labor was not as valuable as it once had been, and measured against the need to conserve the household's limited land resources by restricting it to the sons of the male head of household, brideservice fell into abeyance.

Changes in post-marital residence resulted in a higher rate of patrification and increased agnatic density, with consequences for relations among households in Revealed River, specifically the decrease in multiple strands of affiliation and allegiance groups. Households undertook social strategies to conserve each household's limited land resources, which included not welcoming allies, affines, and kin counted along female lines (mother's brother, groups of sisters). Patrilineages did this most effectively for the Lisu of Revealed River. However, it must be kept in mind that lineage structures already existed in Lisu society and were not created out of whole cloth. Patrilineality was ideologically valorized, if not always practiced in daily social relationships, and so strategies for patrilineality were privileged as responses to the stresses of the constrained resource base. Practice shifted depending on context and what they perceived their opportunities and constraints to be. Lisu social structure was fluid and susceptible to variable permutations in its expression without moving outside of their cultural framework. They used the repertoire that existed to deal with new situations, a repertoire conveyed over time through household relations and ritual (*cf.* Colson 1979:23).

Why were marriage and patrilocalty the point of transformation? Marriage organizes obligations and such obligations shape political life, if by that we mean relations among the different groups within a society (Collier and Rosaldo 1981:278). Kinship and marriage are key points for understanding relationships such as cooperation in political or economic action. This does not make marriage the source of inequality, but kinship provides the idioms by which people organized obligations and rights (Kelly 1993). Most importantly here, marriage and household formation were critical points in the mediation of relations between the environment and social processes since marriage is a point at which new households are formed, who will people them determined, and resources allocated to the next generation (Dwyer and Minnegal 1999:379).

In looking at transformations in Lisu social structure with the end of the opium economy, we see that marriage and land use rules were used to restrict access to household resources. Marriage was not about alliance, *per se*, but about establishing young people as adults. Household developmental time continued as a cognitive frame, the means by which the transformed future was brought about. Marriage and household formation were linked to household wealth. Household wealth was possible through control of labor (opium economy) or access to land (post-poppy economy). Marriage was timed by the age of the children marrying and the wealth available to the parental household; thus, marriage was delayed in conditions of limited resources. Post-marital residence was a matter of the relative wealth of the parental households involved and their need for labor (opium economy) or by their access to land (post-poppy economy) and became the point of transformation. Allegiance groups and patrilineages were two different ways to get people to adhere together, either for managing labor (opium, allegiance groups) or for control of land and wealth (post-poppy, patrilineage), in either case to demonstrate household repute. As a result of land constraints, patrilocalty and agnatic density increased in Revealed River. Patrilineal relations became pragmatically more important in everyday life, supported by ancestral ritual and patrilineal ideology, and politically important in relations with the state. This obviated the importance of allegiance groups as a base of allies in

political and economic processes; in fact the process by which patrilineality was being re-emphasized meant that matrilineal kin, resident affines and allies were a liability. Power now lay in agnates' control of access to land, not in the ability to attract labor in conditions in which autonomy of households had been maintained in part by their ability to migrate, as had been the case in the opium economy.

How reputation was achieved was transformed, not the cultural framework of possibilities. That framework was based on the ideal of household reputation – parents' desire to get their children married, children's desire to get married, the possibility of a viable household in the transformed agricultural economy, and how best to achieve that. Transformations in the agricultural economy required a larger cooperating labor group; patrilineal ideology of hierarchy and obedience counteracted the principle of household autonomy, especially in the context of young household's dependence on the parents of the groom for access to capital and land. Even if population had not increased, the appropriation of land by the state for national parks and watershed conservation created land scarcity. The interdiction of opium further exacerbated resource constraints. All of this resulted in overstepping of the carrying capacity as measured by the perceptions of Lisu farmers. They experienced the lack of land to open fields, decreased fallow periods, declining returns on fields, and lack of cash to fulfill household obligations as a loss of reputation. They adapted existing structures to address these problems in their own households and the future households of their children, particularly sons. Marriage pressures on girls created a transformed decision-matrix in which they had to consider land rights and citizenship in choosing spouses, which resulted in patrilocal post-marital residence and the increased importance of patrilineages in lived experience. As migration became difficult, boys depended more on their parents for access to land. They also depended on their elders for marriage payments, both the cash needed and access to the silver money (*phya*⁵) that had become a scarce valuable symbolic of marriage. Inheritance became a more secure method of securing access to land than hoping to open land someplace else. The mechanism here was individual choice, although that choice

occurred within a dominant structure, a structure that emerged out of global and national political economies that they could not alter. Transformations were an unintended – but not unrecognized – result of each individual's evaluation of resources and assessment of the risks and benefits of incorporation of more distant kin. As practice shifted, it contributed to the renewed practical emphasis on an individual's agnatic kin, their father's land holdings, and their patrilineage.

Continuity and Change: The Mutability of Lisu Social Structure

Lisu populations lived along the Salween (Nu) River, and from north to south they showed a gradient of involvement in and assimilation to Tibetan (north) and Chinese (central, south) political styles. Lisu social structure throughout its distribution ranged from hierarchy to egalitarianism, depending on factors such as wealth from trade, work as mercenaries, and patronage by local states. Nevertheless, a common substratum of meaning existed for Lisu and other partially-Tibetanized Tibeto-Burman peoples. Key among these was the centrality of the household as the basic unit of social organization. Relationships among households through marriage, kinship, and political systems took different forms depending on political and economic conditions. In a sense, Lisu social structure can be seen as being “pre-adapted” to adapt to a wide range of conditions. The cultural patterns that Lisu called on in their adaptation to new conditions when opium was introduced in the nineteenth century and when opium and swiddening were interdicted in the twentieth century already existed in Lisu society. That is, Lisu social structure was marked by an inherent flexibility that allowed adaptation to the wide range of political and economic conditions under which each population lived.

Elements of Tibetan social structure provide an interesting analogy to Lisu social structure because of their regional, economic, religious, and social proximity to each other and cultural congruity or influence for part of Lisu history. Tibetan and Tibetanized societies were marked by fluidity and flexibility in which a great deal of importance was attached to the continuity of lineage or household, depending on the salient institutions in each community. The importance of the patrilineage was relatively muted in most cases, but preservation of the household to the next

generation was an important value where there was significant property to pass on to the subsequent generation (Samuel 1993:130, 149-50). I should point out that it was rarely the case that there was significant inheritable property in the population of Lisu who migrated south; being migratory did not contribute to the accumulation of wealth. This had changed with land constraints and sedentization in late twentieth century northern Thailand.

The household was the basic unit. The lineage was not a matter of a straightforward ideology of patrilineal descent. "In practical terms the operative unit was a residential group of households and their members ..." (Samuel 1993:130). This held for Lisu villages in northern Thailand in the opium economy as well. Much Tibetan folk religion was oriented toward protection of the household, consisting of a system of deities and rituals such as those of marriage "by which the household [was] constituted as a microcosm" (Samuel 1993:151). In Tibetanized remote agricultural communities, some rituals were performed on behalf of the village comprising an annual cycle of ritual devoted to local spirits and to ensure the prosperity of village fields (Samuel 1993:130), as was the case for Lisu ritual to the Old Grandfather or Village Guardian Spirit. In Tibetan institutions there was an emphasis on horizontal linkages and avoiding giving all power to a single individual. For instance, in centralized societies two persons would be appointed to a local official position, one lay and the other religious. In remote agricultural villages, ritual duties rotated among the village households (Samuel 1993:130, 152). A similar type of duality, which I have called diarchic structure (after Tooker 1996), existed in Lisu villages as well. Compared to the societies of China and India, Tibetan societies had much less of a collective orientation. Households and individuals worked out their own destinies using whatever capital – material and ideological – their own karma provided (Samuel 1993:146), thus analogous to the Lisu concept of *myi³-do⁵*. Social relationships tended to be treated as contractual, even marriage (Samuel 1993:152), as was the norm among the Lisu.

Tibetan, including partially-Tibetanized, agricultural communities, throughout their range, were fundamentally similar but marked by variations in social forms under varying conditions.

This resulted in the relative emphasis or muting of features throughout the range of Tibetan societies. The social organization of Tibetan societies was multifaceted and polyvalent, able to adapt to different political and economic conditions (Samuel 1993:335), and yet maintaining an essential continuity. In the context of the variety of forms of rulership, the household and localized descent groups retained importance as the front line of adaptation throughout the range of Tibetan societies. In his study of variations in kinship forms on the Yun-Gui Plateau, McKhann found that "exclusive matrilineal or patrilineal reckoning represented particular historical transformations which were strongly conditioned by political, religious and economic factors obtaining in particular localities" (McKhann 1998:41). The basic building blocks of these societies, such as households, lineages, or political roles were marked by fluidity. This "generalizing tendency" helped Tibetan societies to cope with the enormous range of social, political, and religious institutions in which they occurred (Samuel 1993:141, 335) living in multiple peripheries (McKhann 1999:201). Analogous processes are enlightening for understanding the strength of continuity in the face of great change in Lisu society. When opium and ease of migration facilitated atomization, autonomous households predominated and patrilineal and village structures attenuated as people dispersed across landscape, but ancestor ritual and social ideals of patrilineality remained. An ecological argument is that specialization increases immediate output at the expense of long-term sustainability, while maintaining social structural fluidity expands the repertoire of strategies available to actors in a range of conditions (Colson 1979:23). From this point of view, Lisu, like other Tibeto-Burman peoples, seem to have been the equivalent of generalists.

People remember strategies through collective memories, stories of what they did when the rains did not come (Colson 1979:19-20). The Lisu cultural repertoire included patrilocality and patrilineality, maintained even when not practiced through remembrance of ancestors, the centrality of descent in ritual, and the daily enactment of seniority hierarchy in social interactions through speaking and eating taboos. Change occurred within the context of multiple cultural

patterns that offered repertoires for adapting to change, developed over a regional history of living in shifting spheres of authority (see Chapter 2). Lisu culture allowed the incorporation of elements from new situations into Lisu society particularly into the spirit cosmology, which acknowledged and contained spiritual representatives of the multiple spheres of authority Lisu encountered in their migrations. Values of household autonomy and lineage dominance were used differently in different contexts, but both pre-existed within the Lisu frame. Lisu already had structures and solutions in place to address new conditions imposed by the Thai state.

Kinship in a Global World

The relationship between family structure and economic conditions is a key issue in the literature on households and the family. It has been argued that increased involvement in commercialized markets brought about fragmentation of kin networks, nuclearization of extended family households, and increased individualism (Parsons 1943; Goode 1963; Shorter 1975; Caldwell 1982; Plakans and Wetherell 2003). Similarly, the role of kin in family life is assumed to be reduced in modernization (Ariès 1962; Tadmor 2001). The breakdown of the family in modernity and globalization remains a popular conception. This process appears evident in the Lisu history of growing opium for global markets. Households were autonomous and patrilineage and village structures attenuated. Yet, patrilineal ideology kept these structures present in Lisu culture; they were not destroyed. Historical research in Europe suggests cultural continuity despite radical economic change. There are two main interpretations of this. One is that the nuclear household form was common to western Europe before the rise of capitalism (Laslett and Wall 1972; Goody 1972; Segalen 1986). Another is that the maintenance of kin networks alleviated the effects of insecurity in access to resources (Szanton 1972; Stack 1974; Hareven 1982). Both of these hypotheses can be upheld in the Lisu case.

Modernization and globalization have not destroyed Lisu kin relations. On the contrary, there has been an efflorescence of extended kin structures, here the patrilineage, among the Lisu of Revealed River. The dynamic interplay of household autonomy and patrilineal dominance may

have been built into Lisu social structure. But we need to examine both the existing social structures and the particular forms of globalization that impinged on Lisu social structure to understand the historically specific forms of Lisu society. Different forms of globalization have had different effects on social structure. Globalization is not a unitary force that steam rolls all before it, homogenizing the diverse peoples of the earth. Globalization took the form of both economic and political penetration, the nature of that penetration varied over time, and globalization worked on varying forms of social structure formed, in part, by earlier interactions with global political and economic forces.

The Lisu and their life with opium is an example of globalization starting long ago and far away. Early globalization created conditions congruent with some features of Lisu social structure; later globalization was congruent with another set of features of Lisu social structure. We see here the interplay of global forces and the social structure on which globalization acts. Historically, the global economy penetrated Lisu society by means of a valuable drug crop with an expanding world market, ensuring a reliable cash income used to supplement subsistence horticulture. Existing patterns of regional trade mediated Lisu contact with the global merchant economy as opium was bought and sold along with other small-scale commodities by itinerant Chinese (often Hui) traders. Similarly, the role of the global opium economy in Lisu society was mediated by regional political structures, particularly the nebulous government control of the uplands of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia by regional states. The mobility of upland populations further militated against secure administration of these areas. People such as the Lisu, therefore, were not subject to the control of warlords or corrupt government officials who might have compelled them to grow opium to the exclusion of other crops; that is, involvement in a global market did not dictate relations of economic or political dependency. This was an in-between space of little government control, whether good or bad, yet with locally mediated access to global markets. The political and geographical liminality of these uplands and the people in them was further heightened by the illegality of opium – even when trade or production was

legalized, it was usually regulated (as in the Royal Thai Opium monopoly and British opium policy in Burma). These were conditions that favored the practical dominance of the household in Lisu social structure over the patrilineage. Allegiance groups, flexible and based on contractual social relations, were more congruent with the conditions of open land, migration, lack of political intrusion, and the profitable and reliable cash crop that was opium. Historical global processes attenuated patrilineal kinship; there was little need for it in everyday life.

As the nature of globalization has changed, so has its effect on people. Globalization is mediated through the structures of the nation state and its relationships with the dominant political and cultural powers (Jackson 2003a, 2003b). The modernizing nation-state of Thailand has cemented its control of the borderlands of Thailand and the people living there by means of application of international narcotics and environmental policy that have the similar goal of controlling these out-of-state places. In this, the goals of the Thai state and global policy are congruent, although not completely so. The effects of global and national political and economic processes have had particular effects on the range of types of social relationships. As the Thai state has put global drug and environmental policy into place in the mountains of northern Thailand, Lisu have adapted through reliance on already existing patrilineal ideology to consolidate their position. Practicing patrilineality has been, for Lisu, a reasonable response to the need to conserve household resources over time. Patrilineages were also strengthened by their role in political negotiations with the Project – the agent of state penetration in Thirty Thousand. The ideology of the patrilineage as a unitary social unit created a sense of common interests among people within the lineage, and this structured people's actions to work together as a kin group vis-à-vis the state. The household remained the central social unit as the cultural goal was household viability and reputation, but the way in which household reputation was achieved changed and relationships among households transformed. Patrilineages became dominant over friable allegiance groups, most particularly through the medium of marriage strategies. A performative view of kinship allows us to see how social structure is produced and reproduced through social

action (Peterson and Taylor 2005:108), in this case, actions that resulted in the greater prominence of either allegiance groups or patrilineages.

This creates a rather startling sense of continuity and supports Laslett's contention of continuity in household forms with modernization, *i.e.*, that household forms seen as unique to capitalism in fact preceded it (Laslett 1983). Lisu social forms were based on generative principles, albeit sometimes contradictory, of Lisu society. Nevertheless, the particular transformations also had as much to do with the social structure on which globalization acted.

In understanding how patrilineality re-emerged among the Lisu of Revealed River and the extent to which this supports Meggitt's hypotheses of the relationship between land scarcity and unilineality, we must remember that ecology can not be treated as an autonomous variable. Land use depends on social as much as physical constraints. Here, the key environmental constraint was in fact political – Thai state policy toward forest and narcotics, which in itself was formed by both global policy and the interest of the Thai state in consolidating control over its borderlands. The relationship between the environment and social structure took place through the household, but was actualized based on strategies founded upon the structural principles of Lisu life. The transformations of Lisu social relations were already inherent in Lisu social structure. The patterns or principles were there, attenuated or dominant through Lisu history, and it was on this repertoire of culturally formed social strategies that people drew for adaptation to changing conditions. These were not oscillating social structures that switched from one form to another like binary on/off switches. One society does not simply change by contact with another; it is not that one society is dynamic and the other stable, one dependent and the other independent. Change was a historical process and took place through the active practices of living people who worked from what went before as the prior structure channeled paths of practice.

In the progress of Lisu people southwards from the hinterlands of Yunnan, they have moved increasingly from being on the margin to being enveloped into global processes. This began with the introduction of opium cultivation, which moved them from marginal bandits and

occasional mercenaries for local kingdoms to producers in a world economic system albeit still out-of-the-way producers. In the late twentieth century, opium and swiddening made them objects of development programs that also served as the main vehicle their incorporation into the Thai nation-state. Yet these changes have occurred within the frame of their own historically formed social dynamics and local/regional dynamics (Evans 2002).

In examining the relationships between economy and social forms, we can see the persistence of household structures through time despite changing political economies in part because the link between economic activities and household structure is internal to the household as relationships are culturally defined, setting limits to the possible structural solutions to historically specific problems (Carter 1984). The household is the locus of adaptation, although adaptation here means both stability and transformation. Stability occurs as members of the household attempt to maintain their relationships with each other because household relationships emerge out of culturally meaningful rights and obligations to family members within the household. They also attempt continuity, to reproduce these relationships over time and across generations, demonstrated through the household developmental cycle. On the other hand, the household can be seen as the locus of adaptation that leads to transformation as the relationships among households are responsive to changes in the political economy. The mechanism lies in strategies for stability, but in efforts to maintain the household, changes have occurred both over time, between generations (inheritance or the formation of new households, for instance), as well as in political relationships with other households (from allegiance groups to patrilineages). That is, it was the relationships among households that were more responsive to political and economic conditions. It was a twofold process: household members attempted to fulfill their social obligations to each other and to this end, their relationships with other households were transformed. The specific forms of these transformations, however, lay within the sometimes contradictory social principles of autonomy and hierarchy. Which social forms predominated depended on the ecological, economic, and political conditions that encompassed Lisu society,

not only in the contemporary world but throughout their history. The Lisu household remained primary in part because it was a structure that had demonstrated flexibility in adapting to the encompassing political and economic regional and global forces in which Lisu people lived. In the end, globalization can not be seen as a unitary, homogenizing force in the worlds of marginalized peoples; economic and political change have not resulted in uniform social transformations. Rather, the specific social transformations were in response to the long history of globalization and well as to the specific features of globalization not only in Southeast Asia, but in terms of national policy toward the uplands of northern Thailand.

The Lisu are both subjects and objects of global processes and have been for a very long time. Looking from the outside, they appear powerless objects in the face of overwhelming change. The trade in narcotics trade created particular social forms; international forestry and narcotics policy has eradicated the economic base of their society in northern Thailand, with little to replace it beyond the illegal drug trade and the sex industry. Yet, the Lisu of Revealed River met each challenge with unswerving vigor. The older generation reminisces over the lost ideal crop of opium, but the people I met continually strategized to create a better life for themselves and their children. "If we don't work, we don't eat," I heard. So they kept on working to create a new space for themselves in the increasingly globalized local world in which they lived.

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